

Gorbachev: Reform needed in East

MOSCOW (R) — Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev said communist leaders in Moscow and Eastern Europe had misjudged events a decade ago and rapid change was now required to "make up for the last time."

Gorbachev, speaking to reporters before signing a joint declaration with Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, said Communist countries had failed badly compared with the way in which the West coped with the energy crisis in the 1970s. "In the Soviet Union and in Eastern European countries at that time the situation looked more favourable and we misjudged. We wanted time," he said. "Now we have to make up for lost time and this requires a more rapid pace of change."

It was Gorbachev's clearest appeal for Eastern European leaders to introduce comprehensive reforms quickly to adapt to changing circumstances. Although he did not refer specifically to Czechoslovakia, it appeared clear that he was referring to the Prague leadership's reluctance to alter its policies. His statement coincided with a new protest in the Czechoslovak capital by 200,000 demonstrators demanding the resignation of the country's conservative leadership.

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Iraqi president sends message to Jordan

Aziz briefs King on Gulf peace talks

By a Jordan Times Staff Writer

AMMAN — His Majesty King Hussein was Tuesday briefed on the outcome of the latest United Nations bid to revive peace talks between Iraq and Iran.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, reported that Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, who briefed the King at an audience at the Royal Court, also conveyed a verbal message to the Monarch from Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Petra did not give details of the message but said the King and Aziz, who arrived here earlier in the day, also discussed bilateral relations.

The audience was attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Royal Court Chief Moudar Badran, King Hussein's Political Advisor Adnan Abu Odah and Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Marwan Al Qasem in addition to the Iraqi ambassador to Jordan.

Prince Hassan also received

Aziz and discussed with him bilateral relations and the latest developments on the Palestinian scene. They also discussed scopes of collective Arab work within the context of the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC), the Iran-Iraq war and Iraq's quest for establishing a just comprehensive and durable peace with Iran based on the United Nations resolutions, Petra said. The meeting was attended by Qasem and the Iraqi ambassador to Jordan.

In an arrival statement, Aziz accused Iran of blocking final settlement of the Gulf war.

He told reporters that Iran "is unwilling to open a substantial and real peace talks with Iraq."

Aziz said Iraq, however, was "ready to cooperate with the United Nations by all means to achieve a just and comprehensive peace to the Gulf war," which has suspended by a U.N.-sponsored ceasefire in August 1988.

Petra quoted Aziz as saying his two-day visit to Jordan "comes within the framework of coordination and consultation between both countries on various issues."

Aziz was expected to fly next month to New York for a meeting with U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar on ways to break the deadlocked talks with Iran. Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati also will be in New York for separate talks with the U.N. secretary-general.

The U.N.-sponsored peace talks stalled almost immediately after they were launched 15 months ago. A special U.N. envoy visited Iraq and Iran last week but appeared to have made little headway.

Aziz also said Tuesday an exodus of thousands of thousands of Egyptian workers from Iraq had not damaged relations with Cairo. "If there is any change in our ties, it is for the better," Petra quoted him as saying.

He said relations between Iraq and Egypt had been enhanced by the creation of the ACC, which includes, in addition to both countries, Jordan and North Yemen. He said that some labour disputes had arisen, "but are now settled following a visit to Egypt by Iraqi First Deputy Prime Minister Taha Yassin Ramadan."



His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday receives Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz in an audience attended by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan and Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker (Petra photo)

Israeli army preparing for 'Palestinian armed struggle'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — The Israeli army, concerned that Palestinians may be turning to guns in their uprising, held an exercise in the occupied Gaza Strip this week to test commanders' responses, military sources said.

Palestinians have used firearms twice in the last eight days in attacks on Israeli troops and a suspected Arab collaborator in the occupied territories.

The exercise involved all army officers in Gaza, military government administrators and other security forces but no troops or field manoeuvres, the sources said.

Palestinians waging the revolt since December 1987 have mainly limited their protests to stone-throwing, petrol bombings and civil disobedience.

Troops have clashed with armed Palestinians on at least four other occasions during the uprising.

Last Monday, unknown assailants ambushed an army patrol in the Gaza Strip and killed two soldiers, prompting Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Rabin to say Palestinians were turning to arms in their struggle against Israel.

The command-post exercise was planned before the Gaza attack, the sources said.

In the second incident in a week, residents said masked Palestinian activists in the West

Bank town of Hable shot and critically wounded another Arab they said was a well-known collaborator with Israeli forces.

Gaza shipment sabotaged

Palestinian citrus exporters in the Gaza Strip accused Israeli security men Tuesday of sabotaging the season's first shipment of grapefruit to the European Community (EC).

Mansour Shawa, president of the Gaza Citrus Exporters' Association, said port officials tore apart cartons, threw fruit on the ground and left the refrigerated load to stand in the sun for several hours during a heavy-handed security check.

"It was premeditated sabotage by the security people. They obviously had instructions from their superiors," Shawa told Reuters. "They are destroying the fruit systematically."

The 500 tonnes of grapefruit delivered to the port of Ashdod Tuesday were part of a shipment of 1,100 tonnes worth \$400,000 due to sail for Rotterdam Friday, he said.

If the shipment was cancelled, the exporters would have to pay \$82,000, he added.

It was not clear how much of the fruit was damaged.

Shawa filed a protest to the Israeli defence ministry, which "administrators" the occupied terri-

tories. He said an EC official staying in the Gaza Strip to supervise the exports was barred from witnessing the security inspection.

EC Ambassador to Israel Gwyn Morgan said: "The European Commission delegation is aware of some disturbance at the port and is investigating. We will intervene with the authorities with full vigour if necessary."

A senior Israeli source confirmed that a complaint had been received and said the ministry was trying to cooperate with Gaza citrus exporters to facilitate the shipments.

Security inspections were the responsibility of the port authorities, not the defence ministry, he said.

Gaza citrus producers have signed several contracts with Dutch importers to boost their sales to the EC under a 1988 accord allowing them to export their produce independently of Israel's marketing boards.

Shawa said they had contracts to export 26,000 tonnes of grapefruit and oranges, up from only 1,200 tonnes last year.

Last season's exports were disrupted by strikes, curfews and Israeli measures against the Palestinian uprising.

This season's contracts cover 4,000 tonnes of grapefruit, 6,000 tonnes of shaddock oranges and 16,000 tonnes of Valencia oranges, Shawa said.

Czech premier offers to bring in non-communists

PRAGUE (Agencies) — Czechoslovak Prime Minister Vladislav Adamce met dissidents Tuesday and was quoted as saying he supported a dialogue with the Charter 77 human rights movement and that non-communists could join the government.

Czechoslovak journalist Mihal Horacek, who attended the talks as a mediator, said Adamce promised changes to "the leading role" of the Communist Party.

"He said he supported dialogue with all social groups including Charter 77," Horacek told Reuters.

"He said the federal government should be reshuffled to include members of non-Communist parties and young people."

As Adamce met with the dissidents, more than 150,000 people filled central Prague for a fifth day of protests.

Tuesday's demonstration in central Wenceslas Square came a day after an estimated 200,000 anti-government marchers paraded through the Czechoslovak capital in the country's biggest protest.

At least 35,000 others demonstrated Monday in Brno, Bratislava, Ostrava and Liberec, according to state-run media.

Adamce met with a 10-member delegation that included the newly formed Civic Forum opposition movement as well as representatives of Communist Party organisations, the official news agency CTK reported.

A government spokesman, Marcel Jansen, denied earlier reports the delegation included

Vaclav Havel, a prominent playwright and Czechoslovakia's best-known dissident.

Demonstrators have taken to the streets for five straight days to condemn the government and demand free elections. Police used truncheons, tear-gas and attack dogs to disperse the first demonstration last Friday, and scores of people were reported injured.

The subsequent gatherings have also protested the police crackdown.

The protests are the biggest challenge faced by the hard-line government that has been in place since a Soviet-led invasion crushed the "Prague spring" reform period in 1968.

Posters condemning police brutality were plastered on shop windows, office buildings and restaurants Tuesday in the capital. They carried resolutions by students and artists protesting Friday's assault on demonstrators.

'East German elections'

A West German minister flew home Tuesday after talks with East German leaders, who he said were planning free elections between next autumn and the spring of 1991.

Chancellor Office Minister Rudolf Seiters declined to reveal what he had discussed Tuesday morning with church and opposition leaders in East Berlin.

But as he left West Berlin by air for Bonn to report to the cabinet on his talks he repeated that in his discussions on Monday with Communist Party leader

Egon Krenz and Prime Minister Hans Modrow they had spoken of elections in late 1990 or early 1991.

Radical East German street protesters have raised the stakes in their contest with the country's Communist leadership by demanding the reunification of Germany.

Defying Krenz and Soviet officials who have publicly ruled out a readjustment of Europe's post-1945 frontiers, demonstrators massed on the streets of Leipzig on Monday to call for a united Germany.

"Germany — a single fatherland" proclaimed one slogan held aloft by protesters in a crowd which surged through the city centre and around its ring road. The official ADN news agency estimated the rally drew more than 200,000 people.

Bucharest conference

Delegates to a Communist Party congress Tuesday extolled headline leader Nicolae Ceausescu and offered lavish praise for his rejection of democratic reform.

Politburo member and labour leader Min Dobrescu said Ceausescu's nearly six-hour speech to delegates Monday was "an exemplary model of creative tackling of present-day realities, a genuine thesaurus of social and political thinking."

Ceausescu, the East bloc's fiercest hard-line leader, opened the party congress with a firm rejection of reforms sweeping the region.

Salvador rebels storm hotel

SAN SALVADOR (AP) — Rebels fighting the U.S.-backed government stormed a luxury hotel in northern San Salvador Tuesday and held dozens of foreigners inside. Four U.S. military advisers were also reported captured. Soldiers in an armoured personnel carrier rescued the secretary-general of the Organisation of American States, who had been inside a different part of the hotel complex when the leftist guerrillas attacked. Six government helicopters flew over the hotel and tanks rolled around the Sheraton Hotel in the wealthy neighbourhood of Escalón. Hundreds of soldiers moved into the area, frequently panned down by guerrilla fire. The army moved several tanks into the neighbourhood to combat the attackers, who were renewing an 11-day-old urban offensive they had appeared to be dying out (see page 8). Four U.S. military advisers and one each from Colombia and Guatemala were captured near the hotel, said Antonio Hernandez, a spokesman for the rebels' Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front in Mexico City. "They are considered prisoners, but we will respect their lives and they will not be harmed," Hernandez said.

King visits writer

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein Tuesday visited renowned Jordanian writer Husni Fariz, one of the Jordanian pioneers who were awarded state prizes earlier this week. Fariz could not attend the prize-giving ceremony because of illness and remains in bed. The King wished Fariz a speedy recovery.

French sceptical on Shamir plan

PARIS (R) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who arrived in Paris Tuesday, ran straight into French scepticism over his Middle East plan.

Arab states were likely to reject any settlement which did not start to resolve the Palestinian question, French President Francois Mitterrand said.

A senior Mitterrand aide reported the French position after attending a lunch between the two leaders on the first day of Shamir's 48-hour visit to France.

The Israeli prime minister, fresh from a trip to the United States where the official reception was less warm than usual, left the Elysee Palace for talks with three European Community (EC) foreign ministers.

The various plans aimed at ending the Arab-Israeli conflict were certain to dominate his discussions with Roland Dumas of France, Francisco Fernandez Ordonez of Spain and Ireland's Gerry Collins.

Shortly before Shamir's arrival, Dumas said he backed U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's

five-point plan leading to elections in the occupied territories.

The Baker proposals are supposed to be confidential but authoritative leaks say they could be the vehicle for talks between Israeli officials and Palestinians.

"We are working on the basis of Mr. Baker's plan which we must support and that is the line I will advocate to Mr. Shamir," Dumas said in a French radio interview.

The senior Mitterrand aide said later France still favoured an international conference as the best forum for resolving the Middle East conflict.

The Israeli coalition government accepted the Baker formula on Nov. 5 but only on condition it scrupulously conformed with Shamir's own plan made public last May.

Shamir's plan rules out any role for the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) and does not recognise the right of Palestinian self-determination.

This approach causes scepticism on the French side, the Mitterrand aide said.

Arab ministers to discuss Israeli stand

TUNIS (Agencies) — Arab foreign ministers will hold an emergency meeting in Tunis this week at the Palestine Liberation Organisation's (PLO) request to discuss Israel's actions in the occupied territories and its attitude to Middle East peace initiatives.

An Arab League spokesman said Tuesday the meeting was called after a majority of the 22 member states approved last Thursday's request by the PLO.

The date has not yet been set but the meeting will probably take place towards the end of the week, before the U.N. General Assembly's annual debate on Palestine at the end of November and the beginning of December, he added.

The main initiative under discussion will be U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's five-point formula for Israeli-Palestinian talks in Cairo. The PLO gave what it said was a positive response to the so-called Baker plan Sunday.

The plan has run up against Israel's refusal to let the PLO have a role in the proposed talks and the PLO's insistence that it must name the Palestinian de-

legation.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat had once hoped to attend the General Assembly session, but he has not applied for a U.S. visa to go to New York and PLO officials have stopped mentioning the idea.

An adviser to Arafat said Tuesday, however, that Arafat might still apply for a visa and would probably decide in the next few days.

The General Assembly moved the debate to Geneva last year after the United States refused to give Arafat a visa.

Sari Nusseibeh, a leading Palestinian figure, said Monday a "vacuum of strategy" had developed in the nearly two-year-old Palestinian uprising and called for creation of a provisional Palestinian government.

In an interview with the Associated Press, Nusseibeh said if "positive energy" was focused on building the institutions of statehood there would be less violence, both among Palestinians and with Israelis.

"I believe over the last few months we have lost the initiative and there has been a vacuum of strategy," he said.

Moscow party chief removed from post

MOSCOW (R) — Hardline politburo member Lev Zaikov was removed from his post as Moscow Communist Party chief Tuesday, a spokesman at the city party committee said.

Zaikov, 66, appointed to the ruling party politburo in March 1986, replaced Kremlin radical Boris Yeltsin as Moscow party chief in November the following year after the latter was sacked for criticising the slow pace of reform.

The spokesman said Zaikov had been replaced by the former second secretary of the Moscow city committee, Yuri Prokofyev, during a plenary meeting of the committee. He gave no further details.

It was not clear if Zaikov would remain in the politburo, but his position appeared extremely shaky. His removal would require the convening of a plenum of the party's policy-making Central Committee.

As Moscow party chief, Zaikov reversed the laissez-faire policies of his predecessor, cracking down on unauthorised public gatherings and clearing street artists and musicians from public places.

In remarks broadcast earlier

this year on Moscow Television, he attacked advocates of radical change, accusing them of "utopian spirits, heated by a considerable share of ambition and adventurism."

The dropping of Zaikov was the latest in a series of moves against conservative figures in the Soviet party leadership.

At a central committee plenum in September, two leftovers from the era of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev — former KGB chief Viktor Chebrikov and the then Ukrainian Party chief Vladimir Shcherbitsky — were both removed from the politburo.

And last month Viktor Afanasyev, the headline editor of the Communist Party daily newspaper Pravda, was replaced after 13 years at the post.

The move followed a sharp drop in Pravda's circulation. Figures published last weekend in the weekly Ogonyok showed the number of Pravda subscribers had dropped by nearly a third from over nine million to about six million in the past year.

Analysts said the removal of Zaikov could be connected with local elections due in March.

Aoun accuses U.S. of inciting Christian war

BEIRUT (Agencies) — Lebanese army chief Michel Aoun accused the United States Tuesday of trying to drown Lebanon's Christians in "a sea of blood" by provoking a war inside their community.

Aoun also said for the first time that he would be willing to negotiate with Israel on a withdrawal of Israeli forces from a border strip they occupy in South Lebanon.

He spoke hours after a bomb explosion toppled a statue of the late founder of the right-wing Falange Party with which Aoun is locked in a dispute over an Arab plan to end Lebanon's civil war.

Aoun ridiculed the United States' dispatch of Ambassador John McCarthy to present his credentials to newly elected President Rene Muawad in the North-Lebanon town of Ehden Sunday.

"That was a piece of theater that pleased no one," Aoun told a news conference at the bunker of the shell-shattered presidential palace in suburban Baabda east of Beirut.

"Mr. McCarthy made provocative statements that made me think I am watching a Western movie. He was about to draw and start shooting," said the general, who headed an interim military cabinet for 14 months.

He was reacting to a McCar-

thy's statement in Ehden expressing surprise that the Lebanese Forces, the Christians' main militia, took no stand against Aoun's defiant stand against the peace plan and Muawad's election.

"I am rather surprised that the Lebanese Forces have been so silent about issues that are so fundamental to this country," McCarthy said during his brief stay in Ehden.

His statement was made in a recorded interview with the Lebanese Forces' television station, the Lebanese Broadcasting Corporation, after a telephone conversation with the militia's commander Samir Geagea.

"This is an open intervention in our affairs. It violates all diplomatic traditions," Aoun said. "He (McCarthy) is calling for a civil war... he wants Christians to shoot Christians and drown in a sea of blood."

Aoun was asked: "You have frequently offered to negotiate with the Syrian government over a timetable for the withdrawal of its troops, are you willing to enter into direct negotiations with Israel for a similar pullout from the south?"

He replied: "As a matter of principle and in the absence of any Arab League or United Nations initiative to bring about an Israeli withdrawal, I have no complex about, or fear of, nego-

tiating with Israel to liberate the south."

It was the first time he has publicly made such a statement.

A bomb explosion Tuesday shattered a statue of Pierre Gemayel, the late founder of the right-wing Falange Party, underscoring the rift in Christian ranks.

Police said the statue was blown off its base and partially damaged in the blast that rocked Bikfaya, hometown of the Maronite Catholic Gemayel clan in the Christian heartland northeast of Beirut.

The United States was reported Tuesday to have thrown its weight behind efforts to cut off the supply of arms to Aoun's troops.

The report followed a message to Muawad from President Bush at the weekend, pledging "steadfast support" for the new president and his effort to form a government of national reconciliation.

An unnamed State Department official in Washington was quoted by the main newspapers and radio stations as saying the Bush administration has joined Arab governments in urging Iraq, Aoun's main backer, to stop the flow of weapons.

"To the best of our knowledge, Iraq has abided by these requests," the official has quoted as saying.

Greek politicians agree on all-party, interim coalition

ATHENS (Agencies) — Political leaders reached agreement Tuesday for an all-party short-term government to end a stalemate that followed inconclusive Nov. 5 elections.

The three parties agreed to support a government whose life-term will last until mid-April. Conservative leader Constantine Mitsotakis told a news conference.

The decision to hold general elections in April follows four rounds of talks between the Conservative, Socialist and Communist leaders with President Christos Sarizetakis.

Mitsotakis spoke with reporters after a three-hour meeting with Socialist leader Andreas Papandreu and Communist leader Harilaos Florakis.

The all-party government would serve until mid-April when new elections would be called, Mitsotakis said. It would take action on such thorny problems as negotiations on the future of U.S. military bases, threatened with closure next June.

The three parties agreed that former Greek Central Bank Governor Xenophon Zolotas would be prime minister, he said.

Interim Prime Minister Zolotas, 85, was minister of coordination in a national unity government in 1974, formed after the fall of the military dictatorship which ruled Greece from 1967-74.

The decision to form an all-party government forestalled the need for a new election on Dec. 17, which would have been the third national vote this year.

The attempt at an all-party government was the final step under the constitution before a new election. A deal had earlier been blocked by Socialist demands for electoral law changes by a new government. They had now dropped the demands, Mitsotakis said.

The talks Papandreu has been demanding that the electoral system be changed before his Panhellenic Socialist Movement (Pasek) supported any government.

The proposed change to simple proportional representation would have made it even harder for any party to win a majority in the 300-member unicameral parliament. With the present system, any one party receiving at least 47 per cent of the vote can govern alone.

Mitsotakis, whose New Democracy won 46 per cent of the vote and 148 seats in parliament, had rejected the condition. He said that the party leaders had agreed that the April elections would be conducted with the existing electoral system.

Papandreu, explaining why he backed down on the issue, said that "the deadlock which he faced... would have led to immediate elections with the existing electoral system." He said that his Pasek party would keep the issue alive and try to change the law after the April elections.

Papandreu said that the government will draw up a budget for 1990 and that agreement had been reached between the three parties on economic policy.

New bill would hedge U.S.-PLO contacts with new requirements

WASHINGTON (R) — A bill passed last week by both Houses of the U.S. Congress will place daunting obstacles in the way of dialogue between Washington and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

Its requirements, including a ban on contacts with any PLO member involved in the death of an American and regular presidential reports on PLO activities, are part of the State Department funding bill sent to President George Bush for ratification.

Bush has threatened to veto the bill because of his objection to other provisions within it not directly connected to the Middle East. But administration officials said they were resigned to the PLO clauses eventually becoming law.

"Passage of this bill would make it even harder for the U.S. administration to engage in meaningful dialogue with the PLO," said a senior State Department official.

But the only U.S. official authorised to speak to the PLO was Tunisian Ambassador Pelletreau.

The new bill would require the U.S. ambassador in Tunis, Robert Pelletreau, to ask the PLO for an explanation of nine alleged armed incursions into Israel by PLO-affiliated groups at his next meeting with PLO representatives.

Bush would be required to send Congress an unclassified written report every 120 days detailing PLO compliance with its self-declared ban on terrorism, its position on unrest in Israeli-occupied territories and a host of other issues.

In addition, no dialogue would be allowed with any PLO representative whom the president advised Congress had planned or carried out acts that resulted in the death or kidnapping of an American citizen.

The United States opened a dialogue with the PLO last December after its leader Yasser Arafat formally renounced terrorism and said he accepted Israel's right to exist.

Secretary of State James Baker is trying to lure Israel into peace talks with Palestinian representatives. But he insists on indirect rather than direct contacts with the PLO, using Egypt as an intermediary.

The diplomat said the bill bore the signs of intense Israeli lobbying and was carried with the backing of its supporters in Congress. He noted that Israel had provided the administration and politicians with documentation about alleged PLO actions.

The requirements are a weaker version of a previous amendment which the administration lobbied against and succeeded in having defeated.

That would have barred administration officials from negotiating with any PLO representative unless the president certified to Congress that the representative had not been involved in terrorist activities resulting in harm to American citizens.

"The bill opens up the possibility of additional tension between the administration and Congress and ensures that the question of whether to continue the dialogue is reopened every four months," said one official.

But the only U.S. official authorised to speak to the PLO was Tunisian Ambassador Pelletreau.

The limited nature of the dialogue and the fact that the U.S. insisted at every meeting in bringing up alleged cases of Palestinian terrorism has left the PLO frustrated and wondering whether its diplomatic strategy is paying off.

Administration officials are also frustrated at the new limitations the bill would impose.

"The bill opens up the possibility of additional tension between the administration and Congress and ensures that the question of whether to continue the dialogue is reopened every four months," said one official.

Relief donors threaten to suspend Sudan aid

KHARTOUM (R) — Sudan's foreign aid donors are threatening to suspend all relief programmes unless they can work in rebel and army-held areas, officials said Tuesday.

"The common wisdom now in the United Nations, international voluntary organisations and donor countries is 'all or none'," one foreign official told Reuters.

The Sudanese authorities told relief agencies they could supply army-held garrison towns overland in the south torn by six years of civil war, foreign officials said.

But a government ban on relief flights remains in effect.

Sudanese military leader General Omar Hassan Al-Bashir said this week that a ceasefire must be in place before the airlift of aid could resume to the famine-threatened region.

The government banned flights in order to investigate a bombing on Oct. 31 of a rebel-held town in the south.

Diplomats have said the aid on Yriol was carried out by the Sudanese Air Force.

The row threatens the second phase of Lifeline Sudan. The first phase of the U.N.-led southern aid programme ended on Oct. 31 after seven months.

Foreign relief officials said Bashir told the U.N.'s top official in Sudan, Briton Michael Priestley, Thursday that he thought Lifeline had been biased in favour of the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

He demanded food destined for SPLA-held territory be given directly to civilians rather than to the SPLA's relief arm, the South Sudan Relief Association.

Beside the devastating impact on south Sudan, where 250,000 people died of hunger or disease last year, a suspension of all relief programmes would seriously affect the western regions of Darfur and Kordofan, the officials said.

A poor harvest there has prompted officials to ask for some 100,000 tonnes of relief food for 1990. Kordofan and Darfur were badly hit by a drought in 1984 and 1985.

The second phase of Lifeline Sudan, due to start on Jan. 1, aims to feed 3.4 million people of whom 1.25 are refugees from the war living in some 40 shanty towns around Khartoum.

The SPLA has fought troops in the mainly animist and Christian south since 1983 in a bid to end what it sees as domination by the northern Arabised Muslim majority.

The government and rebels are due to hold a fresh round of peace talks in the Kenyan capital Nairobi on Dec. 1. The first round between the SPLA and the military junta that came to power in a June 30 coup, collapsed in August.

Fighting broke out last month shattering a six-month lull following declaration of a series of unilateral ceasefires by both sides to allow in relief supplies.

The United States Monday welcomed an announcement that peace talks arranged by former President Jimmy Carter would soon begin between the government of Sudan and the guerrillas fighting in the south of the country.

Paper says Iranians held, beaten in Turkey

NICOSIA (R) — A Tehran newspaper Tuesday accused Turkish security forces of beating Iranian students in Ankara on suspicion they were involved in the maiming of a Saudi diplomat last month.

The Iranian News Agency (IRNA) quoted Jomhuri Eslami newspaper as saying Turkish officers severely beat one student after he refused to spit on a picture of Iran's late spiritual leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

The paper quoted "reports from Turkey" as its source and

did not say how many students were arrested. It said some were still in detention while others were released after being warned to keep silent about their treatment in jail, IRNA said.

There has been no official reaction from the Iranian Foreign Ministry about the newspaper allegations.

Relations between Tehran's Islamic rulers and Ankara's secular government were strained earlier this year over a Turkish ban on wearing of Muslim headscarves in colleges.

Ethiopia, EPLF under pressure to end war

AIROBI (Agencies) — Peace negotiators from the Ethiopian government and its Eritrean rebel forces met Tuesday to try to agree on steps towards ending Africa's longest-running civil war.

No word on progress emerged from the closed-door meeting, now in its second day, but the head of the Ethiopian team spoke of "relatively minor differences" and Western diplomats said the two sides were under strong pressure to find a solution to a conflict that has dragged on for 28 years.

"I think the delegations realise the somber mood back home — people are simply tired of the war," commented one diplomat. Another added: "I don't think anyone came here to fail. There is no room for this."

Up to a million people have died in the Eritrean war which has forced more than 800,000 others to become refugees. Impoverished Ethiopia spends more than half its annual budget on the war effort.

Diplomats say the Soviet Union, main supporter of Ethiopian President Mengistu Haile

Mariam, has made it clear the war is unsustainable and he has to talk peace with the rebels of the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF).

The diplomats said the EPLF, had also been told by its Arab allies to seek peace after the three states improved their ties with Ethiopia.

The Nairobi talks, like a previous round of negotiations in Atlanta, Georgia, last September, are chaired by former U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

The delegates are not expected to talk peace but to agree on procedural issues such as the appointment of an African chairman to assist Carter, international observers and a secretariat before a full-scale peace conference is held.

The negotiators themselves acknowledged the need for speedy progress when the talks opened in the Kenyan capital Monday.

"It is evident that the prolongation of the talks as a result of relatively minor differences can serve no purpose except to delay the restoration of peace in our

country and to further exacerbate the misery of our people," said Ashaghe Yigletu, head of Ethiopia's seven-member panel.

EPLF chief delegate Al Amin Mohammed Saiyed stated: "We have come to the Nairobi talks with an open mind and in a spirit of hope and optimism. This hope and optimism rests on our deep commitment to secure agreement on the remaining issues... in the shortest possible time."

Meanwhile in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, the leader of an Eritrean Liberation Front faction Tuesday rejected the mediation effort undertaken with a rival group by Carter.

Omar Sayed Muhammad Al Borj, chairman of the Eritrean Liberation Front — Unified Organisation said that Carter's mediation would transform the issue from the Eritrean-Ethiopian conflict into an inter-Eritrean one.

"This is an incorrect method to deal with the Eritrean question and will only aggravate the problem and turn the conflict from an Eritrean-Ethiopian one to an Eritrean-Eritrean duel," Borj

said in a statement issued here. "These negotiations mean nothing to us and we will not be committed to honour their result because they are being made with a single faction ignoring the other Eritrean factions who represent the majority of the Eritrean people," Borj added.

He charged the United States was not neutral in the 28-year-old struggle waged by Eritrean groups for independence from Ethiopia.

Borj said his organisation, which groups many rebel factions, does not reject mediation for a peaceful settlement, provided this is under the aegis of the United Nations in the presence of an international observer.

He maintained that a unified Eritrean delegation representing all the factions, including the EPLF, would be the only one empowered to negotiate on behalf of all the people of Eritrea.

He said 40 years ago the United States played a "serious role" in the future of Eritrea when it proposed the union of Eritrea and Ethiopia in a federation.

Fight for Salang Highway delays Kabul strike at rebels

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Battling over the Afghan capital's lifeline with the Soviet Union is delaying pre-winter offensive by the Afghan government against rebels elsewhere in the country, Western diplomatic sources said Tuesday.

The sources, speaking in Islamabad on condition of anonymity, said at least four U.S.-backed guerrilla groups were playing havoc with supply vehicles bound for Kabul along the 320-kilometre Salang Highway.

"Although resistance forces along the highway are not able to do more than close it intermittently," one source said, "such attacks are apparently playing a significant role in delaying planned regime operations elsewhere."

As an example, they said the Kabul forces have stopped trying to retake the mountain stronghold of Pajjak, west of the city, which the rebels captured earlier this month.

Nor has the army tried to reform a crucial supply convoy to the besieged eastern city of Khost, since guerrillas stopped it cold in October, they said.

The rebels, who call themselves Mujahadeen or Islamic

"holy warriors," have fought the past 11 years to topple the Kabul government and establish an Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Government forces hold the country's major cities, but insurgents control most of the rugged countryside.

During the past two weeks, Mujahadeen have reported heavy fighting along a key section of the Salang immediately north of a mountain tunnel, where it disappears under about 17 kilometres of the towering Hindu Kush Mountains.

The interruption of hundreds of supply vehicles already has pushed food and fuel prices to record seasonal levels in the Communist-led capital, according to reports presaging severe winter shortages.

Official Radio Kabul Monday announced that government troops had reopened the Salang "forever."

However, diplomats confirmed Mujahadeen reports that rebels had sealed the road above the tunnel, at least between Nov. 9 and Nov. 17.

"Similar attacks on various stretches of the Salang Highway can be expected in coming days, as the Mujahadeen attempt to

disrupt regime resupply efforts before winter sets in," said one diplomatic source.

Some rebel field commanders have said they would allow civilian food and fuel convoys down the Salang, but not military ones.

However, diplomats said that of hundreds of vehicles recently stranded there by Mujahadeen attacks, at least 100 were new armoured vehicles for Kabul from the Soviet Union.

Soviet combat forces were involved directly in the Afghan civil war between December 1979 and February 1989, but Moscow continues supplying military assistance to Kabul.

Some of it arrives via the biggest military airlift in Soviet history, and some is driven down the Salang.

The insurgents, backed primarily by Pakistan and United States, have vowed to keep fighting until they defeat the Communists.

They have refused offers of peace talks with Kabul, claiming it for inviting Soviet troops into Afghanistan.

Meanwhile at the United Nations, Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan, coordinator of a billion-dollar U.N. Rehabilitation Pro-



gramme for Afghanistan, complained Monday that contributions were lagging and that the war-torn country was being forgotten as other events grabbed the headlines.

"This is a time when everyone is looking towards Europe, which is understandable, given the events in East Germany and elsewhere," he told reporters.

"I am fearful... that all of this will make it more difficult for us

to raise funds and stimulate and sensitive people so that they don't forget Afghanistan."

In a written report on "Operation Salang," launched last year, he said close to a billion dollars had been pledged towards humanitarian and aid programmes for Afghanistan, where fighting is continuing between the Kabul government and Mujahadeen guerrillas, despite the withdrawal last February of Soviet troops who intervened in 1979.

But in practice no more than a few million dollars had been available at any time.

Over 70 per cent of the pledges were contributions in kind, most of which had not yet been delivered, while a large proportion of the \$158 million received in cash by the end of August was earmarked for specific U.N. agencies or programmes.

"The picture that emerges is one of an operation which, although seized of nearly \$1 billion in theory, has in practice never had more than a few million dollars at its disposal at any time," the report said.

Funds available for allocation solely at the discretion of the coordinator had totalled approximately \$17 million, of which

about 60 per cent came from a single donor, the report said, alluding to Japan.

Prince Sadruddin said if potential donors forgot Afghanistan, the more than five million refugees living mainly in Pakistan and Iran would not return home since they would feel safer and better off where they were.

He said the assistance programme had successfully implemented the "humanitarian commitment of Afghanistan" by establishing offices in Pakistan, Iran and several Afghan cities, and pre-positioning hundreds of thousands of tonnes of food, particularly wheat and cooking oil.

"The idea is that once movement begins, all of that stuff can be carpet-rolled inside (Afghanistan) and follow the refugees back. Meanwhile, we continue to assist those who are in need inside, particularly the vulnerable groups who are very much below the poverty line," he said.

But his report noted that available funding was quite inadequate for all the activities envisaged, such as road building, shelter, anti-narcotics programmes, education and training, culture and special programmes for the disabled.

MIDDLE EAST NEWS BRIEFS

UAE bans local English papers

DUBAI (R) — The United Arab Emirates banned sales of Tuesday's editions of local English language newspapers for advertising alcoholic drinks, UAE officials said. Newspaper officials said the Gulf News and the Khaleej Times were not issued because of an advertisement for a wine festival at a local hotel.

UAE offers prize for those born on Dec. 2

ABU DHABI (R) — The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is giving prizes to anybody born in the country on its National Day, Dec. 2. Officials said Tuesday that 970 hopefuls had so far registered at the Information and Culture Ministry. But nobody knows yet what the birthday surprise will be.

Egypt to get radar-warning plane

WASHINGTON (R) — The Bush administration has notified Congress it intends to sell one E-2C radar-warning aircraft to Egypt for \$84 million. Egypt already has five of the military warning aircraft, built by Grumman Corp., and the offer is expected to become official in 30 days without objection from Congress.

Sudan calls on Chad to withdraw troops

KHARTOUM (AP) — Sudan has called on neighbouring Chad to withdraw its troops from the Sudanese border region of Darfur. "Sudan calls on the Chadian authorities to withdraw all its forces currently inside Darfur," a Foreign Ministry statement said. Chad has recently claimed two battlefield victories against the Islamic Legion, a rebel group it claims is supported by Libya to destabilise the regime of President Hissene Habre. It said it moved against the rebels in reprisal for incursions by the Islamic Legion onto Chadian territory from the western Sudan Darfur province. Libya denies the rebel movement exists. The Sudanese Foreign Ministry statement also denied the Chadian claim. "There is no presence of the so-called Libyan Islamic Legion on the Sudanese territories and that Libya has never extended any sort of assistance to the Chadian opposition across the Sudanese territories," the statement said.

Soldier's suicide stirs public uproar in Israel

TEL AVIV (AP) — The army ordered a speedy investigation into the suicide of a 20-year-old soldier in an elite combat unit that has stirred a public uproar in Israel, a military spokesman said Tuesday. The suicide, reportedly following hazing by fellow soldiers, raised criticism from legislators and warnings that the harsh methods used to put down the 23-month Palestinian uprising were creeping into soldiers' behaviour toward each other.

Military sources said at least one officer was expected to be ousted from his post because of the incident. However, an official military spokesman said no decisions had been reached on what action to take.

The spokesman, who is not identified under army regulations, said a quick probe of the suicide had been ordered by Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Dan Shomron.

The soldier, Eli Shabar, died at a base in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights Saturday. His unit is part of the elite Givati Brigade, which is often assigned to quell riots in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Shabar reportedly had asked for reassignment from the brigade.

Public outrage is centred on reports that the suicide was set off by harassment from fellow soldiers during a mock trial staged to punish Shabar for removing his helmet in target practice.

Parliament's Defence and Foreign Affairs Committee was to meet on the incident and called in Maj.-Gen. Ran Goren, the head of the army's manpower branch, to give a briefing, a parliamentary official said.

Legislator Sarah Doron of the right-wing Likud Bloc, who called for the committee meeting, urged steps be taken to prevent similar hazing incidents.

"I had thought that such acts of brutality and humiliation were absent from our army. We have to ensure that such an ugly and dangerous thing doesn't happen again," she said in a letter to the committee quoted by the Yediot Achronot daily.

Initial findings of the army probe published by two newspapers Tuesday show the soldiers roused Shabar from sleep for the mock trial after being ordered by the company commander to give him a "motivation lecture."

The unit commander entered the tent during the trial and brought it to an abrupt halt, the Maariv daily said.

But the officer then reportedly ordered Shabar punished by serving two hours' guard duty wearing a helmet. It was after the order that Shabar shot himself. The suicide has led the army to publish for the first time, formerly classified statistics on the subject. Television Monday estimated the number of suicides at 50 a year.

But a military spokesman said the average was 27 a year and that the toll was fluctuating between 15 and 39. Since last April there have been 24 suicides, the spokesman said.

The spokesman said the figures match Western statistics for the same age group and two-thirds of suicide cases were due to causes unrelated to the army, such as personal problems.

But Israeli media suggested the figures may be higher and that even those released by the military were cause for concern.

"The figures are frightening. The numbers published may not be accurate but it is clear we are talking about dozens of suicides in the army a year," columnist Avraham Tirosh wrote in the Maariv daily. "This is a great deal and it seems to me this isn't the way it has to be."

Psychologists warned of signs that the behaviour of soldiers attempting to quell the uprising in the occupied territories could be seeping into the army itself.

"There is an element of legitimising aggression. It can begin with people considered enemies and then be transferred to those not considered enemies but who perhaps at a certain moment are disliked," said Ofra Meisles, a psychologist interviewed on the radio.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME ONE

15:30 Koran
15:40 Programme review
15:45 Children's programme
17:30 Educational programme
18:00 News summary in Arabic
18:05 Cairo news message
18:30 Local programme
19:00 News in Arabic
20:30 Arabic series
21:30 Arabic programme
23:00 News in Arabic
23:40 Play "Petra"

PROGRAMME TWO

18:10 Documentary
18:30 L'Appart
19:00 News in French
19:15 Varieties
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:30 News in Arabic
20:30 Empty Nest
21:00 All the Rivers Run
22:00 News in English
22:20 News series

PRAYER TIMES

04:45 Fajr
06:05 (Sunrise) Duha
11:22 Dhuhr
14:14 'Asr
16:38 Maghreb
17:59 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swedish, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrence Church Tel. 623666
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541
Anglican Church Tel. 625383, Tel. 625453
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 717331
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 772391
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751
Assiut International Church Tel. 655326
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 811255
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 815817, 659932

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
Gradual rise in temperatures will occur and some clouds appear at medium and high altitudes. Winds will be easterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Abdul Wahab Awad 746707
Dr. Ali As'ad 897919
Dr. Khalid Younis 637129
Dr. Mahmoud Al 'Alian 894866
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asana pharmacy 670725
Naima pharmacy 623672
Al Asana pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shamsi pharmacy 637660
IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Al Bishawi (—)
Al Shamsa pharmacy (983238)

AMMAN

ZARQA:
Dr. Khamis Al Ja'fari (—)
Khalifa pharmacy 965417
EMERGENCIES
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 840402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Police Complaints 605800
Police Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 897467
Ambulance/Municipality 787111
Central Amman Telephone 016230
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680700
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615

Electric Power

Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-33200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-33200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813631/32
Khaldat Maternity, J. Amn 642816
Jabal Al-Matruhi, J. Amn 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malinas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsi 6647174
Shamsi Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Musader Hospital 6672219
The Islamic, Abdali 66122157
Al-Ahli, Abdali 6614166
Islamic, Al-Mutahira 7771013
Al-Bashir, J. Amman 77511128
Army, Abdali 8716125
Queen Alia Hospital 0224050
Amal Hospital 674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)991071
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)255555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272725
Ibn Al Nafies Hospital (02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) Information Department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06)53200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
09:10 Jeddah (RJ)
09:45 Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:30 Dhahran, Kuwait (RJ)
10:45 London (RJ)
11:20 Riyadh (RJ)
11:30 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
11:45 London, Frankfurt (RJ)
12:30 Madrid, Rome (RJ)
13:40 Chicago, New York, Vienna (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

08:25 Dubai (AZ)
10:30 Baghdad (IA)
10:45 Cairo (MS)
11:20 Jeddah (SV)
11:30 Sana'a, Jeddah (TV)
11:40 Benghazi (LV)
11:45 Kuwait (KU)
12:10 Damascus (TK)
12:25 Frankfurt (LE)
12:30 Trip

Seminar urges control of treated waste water

AMMAN (Petra) — A three-day symposium on the environmental implications and the usage of waste water in irrigation ended Tuesday with a call for constant monitoring and control of treated waste water to ensure its suitability for use in agriculture.

The symposium recommended that industrial waste be separated from waste water to ensure proper and safe usage of treated water in agriculture.

The symposium, organised by the Jordan Cooperative Organisation (JCO), in cooperation with the West German Friedrich

Neumann Foundation and the Jordanian Society for the Prevention of Environmental Pollution, discussed 11 working papers on scopes and prospects of using treated waste water in agriculture. The symposium discussed the effects of using water from King Talal Dam on the environment and population.

The meeting also studied the side-effects of waste water on soil and ground water in addition to the economic advantages of using treated waste water for agricultural purposes.

Symposium to study development of south

KARAK (Petra) — A three-day symposium on the development of the southern regions of Jordan will be held at Mu'ta University's military wing Saturday under the patronage of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan.

The symposium will discuss 15 working papers on regional planning, exploitation of water and economic resources, role of water in development and the socio-economic situation in Tafleh.

The papers will also deal with the role played by the Jordan Phosphate Mines Company (JPMC) and the Arab Potash Company (APC) in developing

the southern region, and the problems facing the transport sector there.

The symposium will also tackle issues such as the roles of social institutions, charitable societies and cooperatives, Armed Forces, Mu'ta University and the Ministry of Education in the region's development.

Representatives of the Aqaba Regional Authority, the Water Authority of Jordan, the Royal Scientific Society, JPMC, APC, Queen Alia Jordan Social Welfare Fund, Mu'ta University, the Ministry of Planning and the Karak Cooperative Organisation will take part in the symposium.

AIDS study to form strategy for campaign

AMMAN (J.T.) — Students from a clinical instructors programme, an Italian-sponsored project, will conduct a field study on selected target audiences for the purpose of developing strategies, messages, materials, selecting appropriate channels of communications, institutional networks and activities for an AIDS health education promotion campaign.

Dr. Najjar Ziad, a health education specialist in the Ministry of Health who will direct and supervise the study, said the "strategies will also consider how to integrate different messages and channels to reinforce and complement each other."

When asked what are target audiences, he said: "For AIDS health promotion and education target audiences are people sharing common characteristics re-

lated to the spread of HIV (the AIDS virus) to whom promotion messages should be provided. Common characteristics include the practice of a particular risk behaviour, membership in a particular institution or reference group and so on."

"People with some background in common are better reached with information and education adapted to their particular needs. They have a shared perspective, common problem, use similar language, listen to same radio station and have confidence in similar sources of information. This makes it easier for them to learn and support each other in learning," Najjar said in answer to why the study is targeting a certain audience and not the general public.

The study will take up to eight weeks.



Canadian Ambassador Michael Bell, who presented a Canadian gift of dental equipment to Al Hussein camp in Amman Tuesday, is briefed on the camp's health facilities operated by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) as UNRWA Director in Jordan Elc Saaf looks on (Petra photo)

Canada contributes clinic to Hussein camp

AMMAN (J.T.) — Canada has contributed a dental clinic to the Al Hussein refugee camp in Amman. The clinic will be operated by the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA).

The fully equipped \$16,000-clinic will provide services to nearly 30,000 camp residents, according to UNRWA officials present at a presentation ceremony.

Canadian Ambassador to Jordan Michael Bell presented the gift to UNRWA Director in Jordan Elc Saaf and later toured the UNRWA health centre. He was briefed on medical services to the refugees. The centre is an integrated complex providing mother and child health care, examination rooms and a pharmacy.

Latest 'raw fat report' dismissed as 'defamation campaign'

By Mariam M. Shalhin
Jordan Times Staff Writer

AMMAN — Authorities Tuesday dismissed reports that samples of raw fat taken from a major food-producing establishment in Jordan were found unfit for human consumption by its laboratories.

A spokesman for the Public Security Department (PSD), in a statement carried by the Jordan News Agency, Petra, dismissed as baseless reports that the authorities had seized an unspecified quantity of raw fat unsuitable for human consumption in one of the warehouses belonging to one of the major establishments in Jordan.

Director of the Department of Preventive Security Brigadier Adel Armouti said, also in a statement given to Petra, that his office had earlier seized one tin of raw fat and that after an

analysis of a lab test carried out at the Customs Department's laboratories, it was found that it contained animal fat.

According to Armouti, investigators had revealed that the tin belonged to an Egyptian labourer working and staying in the food producer's warehouse and that he was using it for his personal use. Armouti said that copies of a Customs Department letter addressed to the Department of Preventive Security on the results of the lab tests had been "leaked" by unknown parties to the public in order to "defame the food-producing establishment in question."

Hundreds of photocopies of the letter from the customs department, with the letterhead and apparent signatures of customs officials, addressed to the Department of Preventive Security stating that raw fat samples taken from the food-producing establishment

in question were found "unfit" for human consumption had been circulating in the city of Amman. The letter had given the name of the establishment.

Armouti told Petra that the aim of circulating the letter was "to inflict harm on the restaurant for pure commercial reasons."

The unidentified PSD spokesman told Petra that while the department was disclosing the truth of the matter to the public, it was also "appealing to all citizens to be careful when they hear such rumours or receive written memorandums that try to discredit our economic institutions."

The official, however, have made no official denial of the validity of the letter itself, although their statements questioned the validity and interpretation of its contents. The official whose name appeared as the signatory on

Challenges of disability focus of Amman meeting

AMMAN (J.T.) — A nine-day conference on capabilities and needs of disabled persons in Western Asia Tuesday studied two working papers dealing with the causes of disabilities and the main problems facing these people and their immediate needs.

The first paper on the causes of disabilities, presented by the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, attribute many disabilities to wars, acts of violence, poverty and malnutrition. There are at least 500 million disabled persons in the world today suffering from various forms of handicaps, mental or physical, the paper said.

The paper also reviewed various efforts by U.N. agencies in cooperation with national governments to rehabilitate the disabled.

The second paper focused attention on the needs of the disabled in Western Asia. It also reviewed United Nations-sponsored World Programme of Action to help the disabled.

The delegates to the conference, organised by the United Nations Economic and Social

Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), held a general discussion on the obstacles impeding the implementation of this programme in the ESCWA region and the United Nations agencies' contributions for solutions.

The conference, which was inaugurated by Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday, is aimed at providing a forum for experts to meet and exchange information on disability issues and to recommend specific programmes in the framework of a regional plan of action for implementation by the various organisations of disabled persons in the region, according to a United Nations statement here.

The conference is intended to promote disability-related national, regional, and international technical cooperation activities and sharing of resources for purposes of personnel training, exchange of information and policy and programme development and research, the statement said.

The regional office of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in Amman, in coordination with ESCWA, Tuesday

opened an exhibition of modern, technological, educational aids for handicapped children. The exhibition includes a collection of publications on special education and rehabilitation as well as publications on the work of various Arab and international organisations to rehabilitate the disabled.

The Amman conference is sponsored by ESCWA, in cooperation with the United Nations Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs, the Arab Gulf Programme for the United Nations Development Organisation (AGFUND), the regional bureau of the Middle East Committee for the Welfare of the Blind, the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries Fund and the government of the Netherlands.

In connection with the ongoing conference, 44 blind girls from the Egyptian "Al Noor Wal Amal Orchestra" performed a concert at the Palace of Culture. It was attended by Chief Chamberlain Prince Ra'd Ben Zaid and participants of the conference as well as members of the diplomatic corps in Amman.

Ministry seeks to address rise in occupational injuries

AMMAN (J.T.) — A total of 8,437 occupational injuries occurred in Jordanian factories and workshops in 1988 up from 5,907 in the previous year, registering an increase of 42 per cent. The increase warrants extra precautions to be implemented to ensure the safety of workers, Minister of Labour Jamal Al Bedour said Tuesday.

The direct cost of injuries last year was estimated at JD 81,000 while the direct cost was placed at JD 8 million excluding psychological and other adverse effects, the minister said in an opening address to a seminar on factory safety.

"Over the last few years, Jordan witnessed major develop-

ments in the industrial sector which have resulted in more factories and the use of various types of equipment, chemical and radioactive materials and other industrial inputs that have contributed to the increase in occupational injuries and human and material loss. This loss is detrimental to the national economy," the minister said.

In deal with the problem, the Ministry of Labour has directed most of its attention to ensure safety for workers through inspections to make sure factories abide by safety regulations. The ministry also provides advice on safety to industrial firms.

Several government departments have been assisting the

Ministry of Labour in carrying out this task, the minister added. He said representatives of these government departments have formed a Higher National Committee operating under the Labour Ministry to improve safety at factories and industrial companies. The committee, he said, also groups the Civil Defence Department (CDD) and the private sector.

Dr. Faysal Suheimat, director-general of the Jordan Industrial Estates Corporation (JIEC), in his address focused on the safety measures taken by his department at the Sahab Industrial City, which comprises more than a 100 industrial businesses.



Hisham Al Khatib

Housing ministers begin talks

SANAA (Petra) — The ministers of housing from the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) member states Tuesday started a three-day meeting here.

The ministers will discuss means of implementing provisions of a housing agreement concluded in Sanaa in September during a summit of the four ACC leaders.

North Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh received the ministers Tuesday.

Acting Minister of Housing and Public Works Hisham Al Khatib, who is minister of energy and mineral resources, is heading the Jordanian delegation to the meetings.

In Alexandria, Egypt, presidents of universities in the ACC countries met Tuesday to discuss means of unifying university regulations throughout the four ACC member states and scopes of cooperation in the field of scientific research.

The meeting was held at Alexandria University under the chairmanship of its president, Mohammad Said Abdul Fattah, who in a speech underlined the great role played by the universities in fulfilling Arab aspirations and achieving bright future for the Arab citizens.

A four-day meeting for dentists from the ACC countries will start Monday in Baghdad, Iraq. Participants will discuss means of enhancing and bolstering scientific and administrative cooperation and exchange of expertise among dentists associations in the four countries.

Jordan, Syria discuss development of basin

DAMASCUS (J.T.) — A joint Jordanian-Syrian technical team opened talks in Damascus Tuesday to discuss the development of the Hamad Basin, a semi-desert region covering the borders of Syria, Jordan, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

According to officials, the committee is discussing the prospect of setting up a sheep fattening project at the common border at an estimated cost of \$5 million to meet both countries' requirements of lean meat.

Dr. Saleh Muqattash from the Ministry of Agriculture, who is heading Jordan's delegation to the talks, said the project entails developing approximately 500,000 hectares of pasture land in two stages. The project is expected to yield 650 tonnes of lean meat and 2,200 tonnes of milk as well as 120 tonnes of wool annually, according to officials.

Preliminary surveys have been conducted on the site of the project. According to initial esti-

mates, 15,000 heads of sheep could be raised in the first year increasing to 40,000 heads in the 10th year of the project, Muqattash said.

Muqattash said he expected the project to yield revenues and cover its capital in five years.

He said the ministers of agriculture in Jordan and Syria will be fully briefed on the outcome of the talks before further decisions can be made by the Joint Jordanian-Syrian Higher Committee.

Jordan has carried out a series of measures to develop its side of the Hamad Basin for the benefit of its inhabitants in the semi-desert areas.

The Ministry of Agriculture, which is in charge of the development scheme, has been drilling artesian wells and building dams to provide water and other infrastructure work within the 36,772-square-kilometre area.

Jordan's part of the Hamad Basin constitutes nearly 22 per cent of the total area of the basin.

NATIONAL NEWS IN BRIEF

PRINCESS BASMA ATTENDS RECITAL: Her Royal Highness Princess Basma Tuesday attended a music recital by students from various parts of the country as part of the on-going celebrations marking His Majesty King Hussein's birthday. Students from government schools in Madaba, Karak, Ajloun, Zarqa, Deir Alla, Balqa and Ramtha participated in the recital. Also as part of the celebrations, Army Chief of Staff Fathi Abu Taleb attended a music recital by the military band Tuesday (Petra).

CABINET FINALISES KING'S SPEECH: The Cabinet Tuesday finalised His Majesty King Hussein's speech from the throne which he will deliver next Monday at the opening session of the new Parliament (Petra).

PREMIER MEETS PAKISTANI ENVOY: Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker Tuesday received the outgoing Pakistani ambassador to Jordan, who called on the prime minister to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty in Jordan (Petra).

UDD BAZAAR: On the occasion of His Majesty King Hussein's birthday, the Urban Development Department (UDD) is holding a bazaar Saturday at Hotel Jordan Inter-Continental. The bazaar, held under the patronage of the British ambassador in Amman, will include embroideries and ceramics by families, whom the UDD is helping improve their incomes (J.T.).

SWEDISH MEDAL: King Carl Gustav of Sweden has conferred upon University of Jordan President Mahmoud Al Samra, the Swedish Polar Bear Medal of the Order of Commander in appreciation of his efforts in the field of science (Petra).

14 SENTENCED FOR DRUGS: The Military Court Tuesday sentenced 14 people including four Syrian nationals and one Saudi Arabian, to prison terms ranging from five to 20 years with hard labour and the payment of fines ranging from JD 5,000 to JD 20,000 for importing, peddling and trafficking in hashish and other drugs. One of the convicted Syrian nationals is a woman, Bukhtieh Qasem Barakat Maseed, who was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison and the payment of JD 5,000. Three of those convicted were sentenced in absentia. The military governor, who is the prime minister, has endorsed the sentences (Petra).

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- * An art exhibition by Jordanian artists Saman Bourini and Abir Abu-Jadeh at Alla Art Gallery.
- * An art exhibition entitled "The Blue Rider" at the Goethe Institute.
- * A photographic exhibition entitled "Amman Today" at the Royal Cultural Centre.

DIALOGUE

- * Workshop dialogue on Women in Arts at the American Centre — 5:00 p.m.

SYMPOSIUM

- * A symposium on cinema in Jordan at the Royal Cultural Centre — 5:00 p.m.

India, friendship society celebrate Nehru birthday

AMMAN (J.T.) — To conclude the year-long celebrations connected with the Jawaharlal Nehru Birth Centenary and the 40th anniversary of India's independence, the embassy of India, in cooperation with the Jordan-India Friendship Society, is organising a function on Wednesday at 5:00 p.m. at the General Union of Voluntary Societies (GUVS) hall at Jabal Luweibeh.

Ahmad Al Lawzi, speaker of the Upper House of Parliament, will inaugurate the function. Dr. Abdullah Khatib, president of the Jordan-India Friendship Society, and Ambassador of India K. Gajendra Singh will also speak on different aspects of Nehru's life.

Jawaharlal Nehru was born Nov. 14, 1889, at Allahabad (India). He was educated in England and became the first prime minister of independent India on August 15, 1947 and held this post until his death on May 27, 1964. He adapted modern ideas and values and ways of thinking to Indian conditions. Apart from stressing secularism as the basis of his policies, he stressed on the basic unity of India despite its racial and religious diversity. He was deeply concerned and dedicated himself to carry India forward into the modern age of scientific discovery and technological development. Loved by the Indian people, he aroused in




Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister, with daughter Indira Gandhi

them the awareness of the necessity of social concern for the poor and the outcast and respect for democratic values. The four pillars of his democratic policy were democracy, socialism, unity and secularism. He succeeded in maintaining and strengthening these policies throughout his life time.

Internationally, Nehru was one of the greatest statesmen of this century and co-author of the policy of non-alignment along with leaders like Marshall Tito, Jamal Abdul Nasser and others. Throughout his life, he worked

against colonialism and apartheid and was a staunch friend of Arabs. He strengthened India's traditional ties of friendship with the Arab World and gave full support to the Palestine cause and the Arab people.

"The story of Nehru is also a story of India, for in the minds of men Nehru India have become one," said a press release from the embassy of India. "While his life's labour was for his people and their freedom, his vision was one of a world without poverty or fear and blessed with peace."



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Jordan Times

An independent, non-political daily newspaper published in Jordan by the Jordan Press Foundation.

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IT IS gratifying and comforting to note that the Middle East region has taken time to address the issue of the disabled in spite of the fact that the countries of the region are beset by a multitude of political and economic problems. And to underscore the significance of the needs of the disabled in the Arab World, Her Majesty Queen Noor herself graciously inaugurated the conference on the disabled which started its deliberations Monday under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the U.N. Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs and the regional bureau of the Middle East Committee for the Blind in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development.

Above all, those Arab people who have become disabled by armed conflicts, accidents, inter-marriage or other means must be pleased to know that their fellow citizens are still aware of their ordeals and agonies and are trying hard to deal with them in the most effective ways. Queen Noor summarised the problem very well when she stated that only through the realisation of peace in the region and the establishment of justice would the needs and rights of some 15 million disabled Arabs be addressed.

Obviously these two generic characterisations of the essence of the issue of the disabled in our midst can be given further expression by introducing the necessary amendments to all international and domestic human rights legislations that would incorporate the necessary language calling for the protection of the human rights of the disabled. Such additional language should aim at according equal treatment to the disabled in employment, as well as in economic, social, and educational opportunities. As international instruments on human rights are already incorporating language to eradicate all forms of discrimination, including those related to fatal diseases — such as AIDS — it is high time that the disabled also receive the right of attention with a view to protecting them from all forms of discrimination.

What is even more important than safeguarding the human rights of the disabled is to prevent the occurrences of disability whether by wars, inter-marriage or by industrial and road accidents. Therefore, the conference on the disabled is invited to concentrate above all on ways and means to prevent disability by promoting peace in the Middle East, by recommending the incorporation of legislations in all the countries of the region calling for the abolition of inter-marriage, and by calling for stricter rules governing driving and industrial practices. In all such endeavours one would need a comprehensive educational and information drive to complement the legislative one. As for inter-marriage per se, which is perhaps the biggest and most serious silent and veiled contributor to disability among Arabs, Islam can come to the rescue by invoking the famous edict of Prophet Muhammad which calls on the faithful to abstain from marrying from the members of the same family. The necessary ideas and tools are indeed available, what is still lacking is the will to do something about them.

JORDAN PRESS EDITORIALS

Al Ra'i Arabic daily Tuesday voiced pessimism over the future peace prospects in the Middle East region in the light of Yitzhak Shamir's recent statements in the United States and Washington's biased attitude towards the Jewish state. The paper said Washington's failure to commit itself to the proposed international peace conference on the Middle East and Shamir's outspoken declaration rejecting any withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories can only aggravate the situation. The announcement in Washington that the U.S. administration is now making an overall reassessment of the whole situation following Shamir's talks with U.S. administration officials can by no means improve the situation, said the paper. It noted that the United States has proved itself totally behind Israel's plans and tending to throw the Palestine problem into new dark tunnels; and therefore little hope can be expected. The paper also noted that the United States is continuing its various forms of support for Israel, thus encouraging the Jewish state and Shamir in particular to pursue an aggressive policy with total defiance to the will of the world community and disregard to international norms and principles. It is now clear that Shamir has never contemplated the idea of peace and is not interested in peaceful existence with the Arab countries, said the paper. It is therefore incumbent on the United States to follow a different course and take up a positive stand, otherwise there can be no hope for a peaceful settlement to the Arab-Israeli conflict.

A columnist in Al Ra'i Arabic daily pays tribute to the new military junta in Sudan which, he says, recently released Sudanese political leaders in a show of goodwill towards the various political groups in the country. Mahmoud Rimawi notes that the gesture came only five months after the new regime assumed power in Sudan, and at a time when the rulers are seeking peaceful negotiations with the rebels in the south to help bring back stability to the country. The writer says the release of heads of political parties is a sign that the leadership in Khartoum is willing to follow this step by setting free other leaders and politicians, thus contributing towards political stability in Sudan. The present government in Sudan, the writer adds, is unfortunately facing the accumulating hinders and economic catastrophes left behind by the Numeiri regime, and a country faced with famine, drought and continuous fighting in the south against rebel forces. The salvation of Sudan is a formidable task far greater than the present government can handle on its own without the assistance of the political parties and the Sudanese people, Rimawi notes. Therefore, he concludes, the military regime in Sudan should cooperate with political groups, unions, representatives of the north and south and various groups who can help the country escape from the present dilemma and pave the way for peace.

A tide of racism confronts Palestinian workers

By Marty Rosenbluth

DURING the popular uprising in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, Palestinian workers employed in Israel have faced increased harassment and economic hardship. They have lost dozens of workdays, and in many cases have even been fired by their employers for either failing to report to their jobs due to extended curfews and transport bans or alternatively for participating in the regular general strikes called by the Unified National Command of the uprising. Additionally, Palestinian workers have also had to contend with increased harassment at military checkpoints and a growing number of physical attacks by police and racist gangs.

In the past several months, a bad situation has deteriorated even further. The government, the Histadrut (the Israeli trade union federation), various municipalities and settlement councils, and also private employers have been demanding and instituting a series of measures designed to exclude West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians from the Israeli labour market and replace them with Jewish workers. While such discrimination is not new and predates the uprising, since early summer hardly a week has gone by without the "problem of Arab workers being openly discussed in the Israeli media.

Most Palestinian unionists and workers state that it is the government itself that is leading the new round of attacks, and there is much evidence for their claims. On May 15, Defence Minister Rabin announced that as part of the increased pressure to be exercised against Palestinians from the occupied territories if they persisted in their rejection of the government's election plan, the number of workers permitted to enter Israel would be restricted. The next day, and without prior warning, the Israeli military authorities ordered all workers from the Gaza Strip employed in Israel to leave their jobs and return home immediately or face arrest. Simultaneously, the entire Strip, with a population of approximately 700,000, was placed under 24 hour curfew.

Computerised passes. Then, on 17 May, Rabin announced that all workers from the Gaza Strip would henceforth require special permits to enter Israel. He added that the government intended to extend such restrictions to the West Bank in the near future. Before the introduction of the latest measures, Palestinians from the occupied territories did not need special permits to enter Israel, although workers have always been required to register with government labour exchanges.

The new permits were issued from 6 June. It soon became clear, however, that the number of applicants was fewer than the authorities anticipated. After the curfew was lifted, the Unified Command, with full support from union activists and community leaders, called a ten-day boycott during which all transport of workers to Israel effectively ceased.

Even after the strike ended, many workers refused to register for the new permits, preferring to stay at home rather than cooperate with the authorities. Soldiers responded by imposing curfews, forcing workers onto buses headed for military headquarters, and then compelling them to register for the new ID card. The "strike forces" and "popular committees" which direct the uprising at the grassroots level responded to this forced registration by collecting the cards almost as soon as they were issued and destroying them.

The new permits, which supplement rather than replace the identification papers all Gaza residents over the age of 16 are already obliged to carry, consist of plastic cards with the worker's photo on the front and a magnetic strip on the back. Designed to be read by computers connected to the centralised information system maintained by the security services, they allow the army to monitor and thus maintain strict control over the movements of the workers into and out of the Gaza Strip.

According to Yitzhak Rabin, the acquisition of a plastic card is a privilege only to be granted to Palestinians with a "clean" security record. During the uprising, however, tens of thousands of residents from the occupied territories have been arrested and/or detained, which now disqualifies them from eligibility for employment in Israel. Since any form of opposition to the occupation is illegal, any person who participates in a peaceful demonstration, disobeys orders to paint over nationalist graffiti, wears the colours of the Palestinian flag, or even participates in educational activities organised by the popu-

lar committees, could be barred from working in Israel.

"Hebrew Work"

By linking the new permits to the official crackdown on "unorganised workers" (Palestinians from the occupied territories who have failed to register with the government labour exchange and lack the proper certification from the labour ministry), the government is attempting to dampen the growing anger in Israel over its failure to confront rising unemployment, currently at 10 per cent, its highest level in Israel since 1965.

Almost immediately after workers from the Gaza Strip were forced to return home in mid-May, Israelis were brought in to replace them. For their part, employers began offering higher wages and permanent positions where previously low-wage, long-term day-labourers had faced constant job insecurity. These incentives to Israeli workers to fill the vacuum were at least partially successful.

Although the Histadrut did not formally comment on the threats made by Rabin against Palestinian workers, the union federation lent its support to the government's plan to replace Palestinians from the occupied territories with Israelis. Histadrut General Secretary Yisrael Kessar called upon all sectors of the economy to cease relying on "cheap labour" from the territories and urged a "return" to Avodah Ivrit (literally "Hebrew Work", historically the slogan for an exclusively Jewish labour force).

More recently, the labour ministry announced that it was reviewing several plans to replace West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians. One scheme currently being considered would allow unemployed Jewish workers who take low-wage jobs previously held by Palestinians to continue receiving unemployment payments in addition to their wages. In the construction industry, the labour ministry, along with Histadrut-affiliated Building Workers Union, is currently working on a proposal which would give Jewish workers training for jobs in the building trades, full unemployment benefits for one year in addition to their salaries.

The Histadrut has its reasons for wanting to get the plan underway as soon as possible. Building Workers Union leaders have been stepping up their efforts to reduce the proportion of Palestinian workers in the construction sector and reestablish a Jewish presence. Currently over 60 per cent of those employed in the building trade are residents of the occupied territories.

Other industries are also reducing the number of jobs available to Palestinians. And Jewish settlements in the Gaza Strip have tried to replace Palestinians working in construction, maintenance, and agriculture. The settlers mounted an intensive but unsuccessful effort which included a job fair and hussing in hundreds of unemployed workers from nearby Israeli cities.

"The Arabs are coming!"

In addition to the newly imposed permit system and government-inspired mass dismissals, Palestinian workers have also faced a series of locally organised initiatives to segregate them comfortably out of sight or, failing this, exclude them altogether. The mayor of Petah Tikva, Giora Lev, announced a plan to bar Palestinian workers from moving freely through his town. Lev proposed the construction of a special terminal on the outskirts of Petah Tikva where workers

would be required to wait upon arrival until their employers pick them up and drive them directly to work. The employers would then be required to transport the workers directly back to the compound after work.

"All Arab workers who come to Petah Tikva will either be at work or at the terminal. We don't want them on the streets," Mayor Lev told the Jerusalem Post. "They are taking over the city!" Lev, a former Israeli military attaché to South Africa, also demanded that any Palestinian found walking the streets be immediately arrested. "This city is for Jews, not for Arabs," he told the Post.

The West Bank settlement of Ariel quickly followed suit by requiring all Palestinian workers to wear badges identifying them as "foreign workers". This time, however, the measure was denounced even by several right-wing politicians, who feared unflattering comparisons between the badges and the yellow stars Jews were forced to wear by the Nazis. Yielding to public pressure, policy was scrapped.

Key government leaders, including cabinet ministers, have stoked the fires of racism spreading throughout the Israeli public. During the same week that the new permit system was announced, Labour and Social Affairs Minister Moshe Katsav charged that Palestinian workers were attempting to sabotage and undermine the Israeli economy. While admitting "there is no concrete proof" for his allegations, Katsav accused Palestinian workers of putting glass in restaurant and hotel food, contaminating food products with spit and urine, and sabotaging medical equipment in hospitals. Katsav stated that workers had failed to put the required amounts of steel and cement into construction work, to the point where "one can expect the collapse of the residential buildings in which many Israelis live."

Workers held hostage

By explicitly linking the above measures to Shamir's election proposal, the Israeli authorities are clearly trying to hold Palestinian workers hostage to the political process. On repeated occasions, in fact, Defence Minister Rabin and other Israeli politicians have claimed that employment in Israel is not a right but rather a privilege that can be revoked at any time. The reality, however, is that most workers from the occupied territories simply have no choice; over the past 22 years, the military government has blocked all attempts by Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to develop autonomous economic infrastructure which could provide alternative sources of employment.

Palestinian union leaders fear that the new policy will mean that West Bank and Gaza Strip workers will face even worse conditions on the job than before; in a situation where Palestinians need their wages more desperately than ever can be fired at will to be replaced by Jewish workers, Israeli employers can use threats of dismissal to devastating effect.

While the new identity cards and the rise in Israeli racism complicate the already serious problems of Palestinian labour in the short term, union activists see long term political and economic change as the only viable option for an improvement in the situation. As one West Bank unionist put it, "the real solution would be for us to develop our own economy free from interference by the Israeli authorities, to gain our economic independence from Israel" — Middle East International, London.

A farewell to arms

For eight years Julie Flint, the Guardian's correspondent in Beirut, has reported its wars, its hostage taking and its political bankruptcy. Now she is going home. Here she recalls the horror and humanity she leaves behind.

I TOUCHED down in Lebanon on December 9, 1981, and was immediately hijacked by militia seeking the release of Imam Musa Sadr, the Shi'ite leader who disappeared in Libya in 1978. The hijackers had already commandeered a Libyan plane and wanted new hostages to exchange for fuel. I had only two words of Arabic then — "thank you" and "goodbye" — and saw no way of talking my way out of trouble. The only hope seemed to lie in walking out.

We were initially held just outside the main terminal building, parked cars in front of us and offices behind. It was pitch-dark, the gunmen were nervous and the passengers bawled, and so it seemed entirely sensible to vault through the nearest window. The hijackers saw nothing. But the clerk inside got up from his desk, picked me up in his arms and heaved me back over the sill. Welcome to Lebanon.

A second opportunity to hide away presented itself when the hijackers drove us back out to the plane, gathering us at the foot of the steps. Nowhere is as empty as an empty runway in the middle of the night and frightened people are poor companions. Better by far to climb into the plane, feigning hysteria, exhaustion, pregnancy... anything to be able to hide between seats rather than between people when the shooting begins. But as I stode resolutely up the steps, one of the hijackers plucked me by the sleeve and, speaking in English for the first time, said: "You must come back down. But don't be frightened. It'll be over soon." It was only just beginning.

Six months later Israel invaded Lebanon, accusing the U.N. spokesman who reported the advance of giving away military secrets. The invasion marked the end of a year that had not seen a single killing in Galilee, but that had seen Yasser Arafat received by the Pope. The PLO was becoming respectable. "Operation peace for Galilee" was designed to bomb it back into the stone age. Memory is short in Lebanon, but those were evil days and the images do not fade: the victims of phosphorous shelling, faces bubbled like fired eggs and bodies bursting into flame even after death; the child who had been "degloried" dying, to the relief of her dry-eyed young father, not because her head had been skinned — "that's no problem," said the doctor — but because the sheer number of casualties forces surgical "selection"; the spastic children at the ill-named Home for the Aged lying in their own excrement, three to a cot, as the half-mad fed the wholly mad outside their door. We stroked the cheek of one little girl whose body was burning up with fever, her useless limbs thin and twisted like a spider's, and she smiled.

When we returned the following day, with cigarettes for the handful of staff still running that desperate place on the edge of the Palestinian camps, she was dead. After the siege was over, a journalist who believed Israel maligned came to Beirut to disprove, she said, the use of phosphorous. She had read of the destruction of our office, wrecked in an orange blast that irritated our skins for weeks. Perhaps the itching came from tracer bullets. I have never been so angry in my life. At Barbir Hospital, dead babies had been plunged in buckets of water to stop the burning. "Come with me, honey," I growled, making for our "souvenir" collection with murder in my heart, "and I'll show you a 155mm tracer bullet." After the

evacuation of the PLO, there were brief hopes of national reconciliation as Amin Gemayel embroidered promises of reunification with pretty gestures. But gestures were all they were. The Gemayel years were grotesque, corrupt, wasted years — beginning with the public execution of a murderer who was dragged untroubled to the gallows, human dignity sacrificed to political posturing, and ending with Gemayel's calm bequest of a constitutional void.

They were difficult years for foreign journalists — especially those suspected of having any sympathy for the Palestinian cause. Some were expelled, many harassed and women especially singled out. The accusations might have been funny had they not been so time-consuming — and had they not emanated from a regime that was making fortunes from "reconstruction", torturing prisoners in the Information Ministry in west Beirut, trafficking in passports from the National Security Office in east Beirut.

The excesses of Gemayel's security and intelligence services, and his army's attack on the Shi'ite southern suburbs as the first protests began, led directly to the militia takeover of west Beirut in February 1984. The early days of Falange-free west Beirut were heady days, a unique opportunity for the "nationalist" parties to rescue west Beirut from neglect. But they blew it, in spectacular fashion. West Beirut was never more neglected, never more sectarian. "Nationalist" fought "nationalist" and the city divided, amoeba-like, until the battle lines ran from block to block. Foreigners, Christians, Armenians and Jews were kidnapped and killed. Criminality flourished, community flourished. Weapons were the answer to everything as the Lebanese pound collapsed; blocked drains were unblocked with hand grenades; poverty was alleviated at gun-point.

One glorious spring day in 1986, out on a fishing expedition, we sailed into hundreds of dying gulls flapping silently in the waves, the debris of a militia leader's target practice. The Syrian army's return to west Beirut in February 1987, at the desperate request of west Beirut, brought a large measure of respite. But still it was only just beginning. General Mubel Aoun's "war of liberation" against Syria's "occupation", launched on March 14 this year with a criminal bombardment of west Beirut, was uniquely difficult. It lasted twice as long as the Israeli invasion, with only a fraction of the number of casualties, and had none of its vibrancy. There was no sense of history-in-the-making, no pride as east Beirut fought west Beirut with the behemoths of the Second World War, no resilience in a city that is famed for it.

That Gen Aoun's short, shambling person was — and still is — a Pandora's box of national frustrations cannot be denied. He radiates contempt for the corruption of traditional politicians, anger at the self-serving diplomacy of the West, despair over 15 years of war and foreign encroachment. He spoke, in the beginning, for every Muslim who wanted never to cross another Syrian checkpoint and for every Christian who wanted a Christian hero after the likes of Gemayel. But his war was cataclysmic more than catalytic. It was ill-timed from the start. And at the end, as he dissolved parliament and forced every deputy in the land into Syrian-

controlled territory, it was counter-productive as well as almost certainly unconstitutional. In fighting the Syrian army, Gen Aoun killed Lebanese. In warring Syria out, he brought Iraq in. In "liberating" Lebanon, he imprisoned the Christian enclave. In demanding public morality and accountability, he whipped up a wave of people-power that showed no respect for age or creed and answered to no one except him.

One fine day in September, as the artillery played allegretto, my small white cat lay down and quietly died. It had simply been too frightening for too long. Too many people had fled the city, too many friends had fled the country — and not only for London and Paris, but for Australia, Canada and Brazil. As I bought my own ticket this week, long after the final ceasefire, the travel agent held up a dozen passports and, flicking through the title pages, read dates of birth that ran from 1962 to 1971. "All these are leaving," he said, heavier than I have ever seen him. "We need them to build the future, but they are not coming back."

The west Beirut I knew even in 1981 is now an old lady who no longer bothers to lie about her age — so changed that it is difficult to believe the years can be stripped away. On Hamra, where the beau monde paraded until dawn, squatters from occupied South Lebanon lead sheep indoors to slaughter. Women who knew the good old days wait in fishnet and fagends in dimly, red-lit bars. Street smells of raw meat. Rotting vegetables are encrusted in the pavement. "Snake eater" and "Maid to order" are showing at the Estrale cinema. Young men hiss at you and touch you as they pass.

I shall miss parts, but no longer the whole: gardenias in summer and sun on the sea in winter; a fisherman on the corniche and a coffee man's smile; the warmth of the ordinary people; the smallness of the city and the ease of the pace; the ragamuffin who used to sell cigarettes and roses outside the Commodore Hotel and who, on glimpsing me in a pizzeria years later, told the waiter with all the gravity of a man: "Treat her well. We are old friends."

I shall not miss the garbage, the greed of the dollar merchants, the vulgarity of the warlords; the "martyrs" of Beirut; the deepening sectarianism; the militant Islam that can laugh at the ordeal of hostages and the muscular Christianity that does not know what compassion is. Despite the chaos in which Lebanon finds itself today, with a pretender in the president's office in east Beirut and a claimant in the prime minister's office in west Beirut, there are many who believe that this is, at last, the beginning of the end, the point at which Beirut begins to be reborn. There must have been a chance in the Gemayel years, as Israel reeled under the weight of its own invasion, Syria retreated to the Bekaa valley and the "peacekeeping" armies of the west fled before the car bombs of the Islamic Jihad. But it was missed.

Today there is glensnost, Arab consensus on Lebanon and the Intifada in the occupied territories to move along the primary, Palestinian problem. Political Maronism has agreed to political reform; and last week, as the Iraqi charge d'affaires congratulated President Muawad in west Beirut, east Beirut, eternally betting on outside intervention, seemed at last to be on its own.

Once the phenomenon of Gen Aoun has been resolved, the optimists say, Lebanon will be on course. The general has already been dangerously underestimated. But maybe, just maybe, it could be over soon.

India at crossroads — 498 million people decide future

By Michael Batiye
Renter

NEW DELHI — The world's biggest electorate is in the mood for change and looks ready to throw Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party out of power for only the second time since India became independent.

India is at a crossroads. Its 498 million voters start deciding Wednesday which path leads to the brightest future.

Not only is the ruling party's grip on government at risk. Many senior Congress leaders are muttering about dropping Gandhi if he fails to lead the party back to power.

That could mean the end of the Nehru dynasty. Gandhi, his grandfather Jawaharlal Nehru and his mother Indira Gandhi have ruled India between them for 37 of the country's 42 years of independence.

Political analysts, diplomats and Renter reporters roaming the electorally decisive north all re-

port a desire for change.

The growing urban middle classes have prospered during Gandhi's five years in power but are generally sympathetic to opposition charges that the prime minister and his party are corrupt and want them to go.

Many villagers complain their lives have changed little and say they have nothing to lose by voting for the opposition.

In India, however, moods often change in the last few days before polling. The country's first election held under normal circumstances could yet surprise the pundits.

India's previous eight elections since independence in 1947 have been preceded by wars, deaths of leaders and, once, a state of emergency.

Not this time. Gandhi has faced none of the cataclysms that produced waves of sympathy or revulsion in the past.

What is unusual in the 1989 elections, which the country's two leading opinion polls suggest

Gandhi will lose heavily, is an almost united opposition.

Congress has never won a majority of the popular vote despite ruling India for all but two years of independence in a first-past-the-post system based on the model of its former British rulers.

Even in the last elections in 1984, when it won 415 seats in the 545-member parliament on a huge wave of sympathy after the assassination of Indira Gandhi, Congress got only 48 per cent.

A three or four per cent swing would end its absolute majority. The latest poll suggests an eight or nine per cent swing.

"The unity of the opposition has a simple arithmetical impact. By not splitting the vote, the opposition picks up 75 seats, which means a swing of 150," said Pranroy Roy, India's leading pollster.

But in India, a vast and varied country of 800 million people, not much is simple and two huge questions hang over the Nov. 22, 24 and 26 elections.

Gandhi has lost a hefty chunk of his traditional Muslim vote in a massive and often violent Hindu-Muslim furor over a sacred site both faiths claim in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh.

But how many Hindu voters has he picked up in exchange?

The other big question concerns memories. In 1977, Indira Gandhi ended a two-year state of emergency thinking she would be swept back to power on a wave of gratitude.

Instead, Indians outraged by the suspension of their civil liberties, not only swept to power an opposition united for the first time, but voted her out of parliament.

That opposition government, including many of the same men again seeking power, fell apart after two years of bickering. Congress swept back.

So how many people will decide at the last minute that a vote for the opposition is too much of a risk?

"It's a big question and un-

possible to answer. But I think there will be a lot," said Roy, whose polls have shown a rapid decline in Congress popularity over the last three months.

Congress says the Muslim vote is coming back to the party in fear of the right-wing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party, part of the opposition electoral alliance.

The alliance is also split over the temple dispute and Congress says this reinforces doubts about the opposition's ability to form a stable government.

Congress says publicly it will win more than 300 seats. Battlegrounds are being drawn over Gandhi's future and whether Congress should seek a coalition to stay in power.

"Gandhi's biggest mistake was not standing up to the party power brokers. We have a party in decay," one said.

"I'm beginning to think defeat would not be a bad idea. It would give us a chance to clean out the manipulators, opportunists and third-raters," he added.

Small jobs, big profits

By Emma Rohson

GUATEMALA CITY — When thieves robbed the cafe of Ana Guisela Pelen Franco, they took money, tables, chairs — the lot. All she and her husband had left to live on was their ability to craft beautiful ornate mirrors out of plaster. Once just a sideline, it soon gave them more wealth than they ever dreamed of.

Under a national programme aimed at helping small businesses, the Pelen Francos got a loan at 16 per cent, the country's lowest commercial lending rate, moved into a large workshop and took on two workers. Soon they were thinking about exporting the gilded moldings of flowers, eagles, and the shy national bird, the quetzal, which began to crowd their storage room.

Without the small business programme, the best the family could have done was negotiate a small loan at 60 per cent. The repayments would have prevented them from expanding. "We now have the money to employ six more people," says Mrs. Pelen Franco. Indeed, in less than a year, their output has tripled and their profit margin has increased to a hefty 100 per cent.

Launched by the Guatemalan government in 1988 with a U.S.\$139,000 grant from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the project seeks to help 40,000 small, unregistered businesses. While boosting economic growth, and ultimately, the country's tax revenues, it is also tackling a problem common to much of Latin America: urban underemployment.

The programme is run by six

grassroots non-governmental organisations (NGOs) dotted around the capital and is supervised by a secretariat that reports directly to the country's vice-president. "The NGOs allow the project to work more quickly and efficiently than if it were managed directly by the government," says Augusto Maizet Aragon, a project advisor. "They have more experience with small, informal businesses."

The scheme was started by President Mario Venicio Cerezo Arevalo's government, which upon election in 1986 launched a national reorganisation plan aimed at stimulating business and democratising credit. The new policy was sorely needed after the economic crisis of the early 1980s, when many "formal sector" jobs were lost as economic growth contracted and inflation grew. Gross domestic product has declined nearly four per cent a year in real terms since 1980, while the currency, the quetzal, has shrunk to less than 40 per cent of its 1985 value. Real wages nationwide have declined steadily.

The urban workforce, meanwhile, is swelling as Guatemalans move from rural areas. Most of these arrivals eke out an uncertain living in the informal sector where they have limited access to either credit or job training.

Understandably, hordes of small entrepreneurs came knocking on the secretariat's door when a national publicity campaign heralded the loan programme. "We had to set up an information office to give people loan conditions and the location of the nearest NGO," says project advisor Yessid Bartera. To qualify, a business must be at least two years old, have two to seven

employees and working capital not exceeding \$4,444. Those seen likely to maintain a ten per cent annual profit growth get a loan averaging \$1,300.

"With chequebooks in hand, these people deal with the large suppliers of the formal sector in what is often their first contact with the established business world," says Adrian Calientes Rivera, an officer of the Banco de los Trabajadores (Workers' Bank), which agreed to distribute the credit. If the entrepreneurs cannot sign their names on the cheques, they make a thumbprint.

The risks of distributing small loans to people who have little or no experience in managing money are obvious. But the programme's careful selection process and free management courses have helped maintain an excellent repayment rate. Last year 92 per cent of the payments on loans totalling \$4.7 million were made on time — better than the national average for commercial loans.

The selection is handled by the NGOs, who are staffed by commercial managers, industrial engineers, economists and social workers. First their consultants screen the most promising prospects in their district, then the Banco de los Trabajadores assesses the management potential and financial viability before granting credits. Last year the programme assisted nearly 4,000 businesses, each of which created an average of 1.2 jobs.

The NGO Fundemix supported 600 small businesses in 80 different lines of work last year. "We've everything from plumbers and shoemakers to manufacturers of bird-cages and Worcestershire sauce," says the NGOs' Director



A loan enabled this mirror-maker to triple production.

Herla del Carmen Santos. Each weekend in Mexico, a municipality of one million people just north of the capital, Fundemix holds sales of the small businesses' goods.

Mrs. del Carmen Santos visits the businesses regularly, and helps iron out problems. The day she called on Hilario Grave Perez, the bird-cage maker was complaining that his loan of \$444 was not going far enough. "I still need a soldering iron, a compressor and metal saw," he complained. But she reminded him that since he had repaid more than 60 per cent of his loan, he was eligible under the programme to roll it over.

Mr. Grave Perez's first loan allowed him to move his workshop from a small back-room to a large salesroom on a main road. He doubled his output and hired

nine more people, although he soon had to let five of them go. Still, during the last Christmas season, he made \$2,600 in only 17 days, compared with less than \$300 the previous December, before getting the loan. What he is most proud of is that his skills were recognised by a deluxe hotel in the capital during last year's national micro-enterprise fair. "I sold four cages for 900 quetzales (\$333) to Hotel Dorado," he says, showing his receipt as proof.

Some of the businesses helped have started exporting. Others are replacing costly imports. International trade fairs for small businesses will be held this year in El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico, with the aim of fostering exports and strengthening the regional market too.

Guatemala's programme has

already caught the eye of several donor governments whose support is allowing expansion to other cities this year. Loans from Taiwan and the Inter-American Development Bank, and donations from the governments of the United States, Belgium, Holland and Israel, have helped provide a credit pool of \$22.2 million to promote 15,000 small businesses with a potential for creating over 20,000 jobs.

The secretariat's director, Fernando Rivera Irias, says such a programme is a cost-effective answer to Guatemala's underemployment problem. "It costs at least three times as much to create a sector," he says. "We've still got 40 per cent unemployment and underemployment — but we're getting to the root of the problem." — UNDP.

East Germans trickle back home

By Tony Czeckza
The Associated Press

EAST BERLIN — Diethard Wietsche has gone back to East Germany — where he says he spent 10 years in prison for trying to escape — because he's disappointed by life in the capitalist West.

After having trouble finding a job and missing the security of his homeland, he says he's now hopeful about the promises for changes in East Germany.

Wietsche was one of about 60 East Germans who had arrived by Wednesday at an East Berlin centre set up to welcome back refugees who had fled to the West over the past several weeks.

"Every day about 30 people knock on the door here and ask to re-enter the German Democratic Republic," said Peter Heyn, deputy chief of the centre in Berlin's Northeastern Buch District. "The climate in the Federal Republic (West Germany) has gotten colder."

He predicted the centre's capacity of 150 people would be reached soon, but it is not yet clear how many of the 200,000 East Germans who arrived in West Germany this year will be returning home.

West Germany's ZDF television network said Wednesday about 7,000 disillusioned East Germans were expected to turn their backs on their rich neighbour. But officials on both sides of the border said there were no signs of a major organised exodus.

An air of old-style secrecy surrounds the East Berlin government returnee centre, East Germany's only one until the National Red Cross started setting up several of its own in anticipation of refugees wooed back by the domestic climate of reform.

Gray corrugated-metal fences keep outsiders from peering in. Patrolling soldiers demand identification from anyone wanting to enter the eight-story building.

Heyn said the authorities are trying to simplify procedures for

regaining East German citizenship.

Wietsche, 33, a native East German who said he was jailed for 10 years for trying to flee to the west earlier, said that after he finally made it he found that West German society just wasn't for him.

"But what made the biggest difference was the fall of Erich Honecker," he said, referring to the hard-line East German leader ousted Oct. 18.

A car mechanic, Wietsche moved legally to the Bavarian City of Regensburg two years ago after being released from jail. Under new East German leader Egon Krenz, he said he expects basic freedoms to become a reality soon.

A 48-year-old warehouse worker who would not give his name said he left West Germany a few days ago after four years, feeling "totally disappointed." "I was allegedly too old for a job," he said. "It wasn't for me. I wanted to come back mainly because of the security, which I missed quite a bit in the Federal Republic."

The East German Red Cross, which said it was housing for a return wave of up to 10,000 people, opened four reception centres along the border with West Germany. Authorities in cities such as Magdeburg and Erfurt readied emergency shelters in military barracks, schools and dormitories.

Dispatches by East Germany's state-run news agency ADN Wednesday suggested only a trickle of returnees had arrived at the official centres.

Officials said the flow back to East Germany would be difficult to document since many would simply return to their homes and most had become West German citizens, meaning they are not registered when leaving the country.

A major outflow is expected from Bavaria, which borders on southern East Germany, ADN quoted a local official as saying.

Women in Bangladesh are finding some liberation from daily drudgery by finding work in factories, but they have few workers' rights little job security.

By Nuru Yakub-Ahsan

A liberation of sorts

DHAKA, Bangladesh — Renu and Razia are not ordinary girls. Aged 10 and 12, the sisters are envied by neighbours in their Babapura slum in Dhaka. Every month they each bring home about \$10, wages earned as "helpers" in a garment factory two kilometres from home.

Their father, Azar Ali, migrated from south of Dhaka to the capital in 1986. Initially, life was hard but his wife made a little money grinding spices for a students' hostel nearby for which she got a few takas and a meal which she brought home to share with the family.

Azar Ali learned to drive a rickshaw, but man and wife still earned barely enough to feed a family of six and pay \$11.60 monthly rent for the one-room shanty they call home.

Then a student leader at the hostel got jobs for the sisters in his uncle's factory. Renu and Razia work six days a week, from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., with a half-hour break for lunch. But they cannot afford to bring food with them. They eat before starting for the factory and have to wait until evening for their next meal.

If the manager pleases, they have Fridays off. Overtime pays Taka 1.50 an hour (0.05 U.S. cents) and the girls are happy to have extra work. It is a bonanza for them.

The sheer economic desperation of workers like Renu and Razia makes them vulnerable to exploitation. They are unaware of their rights, and have no bargain-

ing power as the alternatives they face are starvation, begging or selling themselves.

Today, nearly 300,000 workers have garment factory jobs. Over 80 per cent of them are young women and children like Renu and Razia.

The clothing business took off in 1980 when a Bangladeshi company, with 500 workers, went into a joint enterprise with a South Korean firm. The Koreans offered training facilities and sewing machines to set up a factory wholly devoted to exports.

By 1987, sales had risen to 2.3 million shirts valued at \$5.3 million. Garment factories mushroomed. Garments from Bangladesh's 700 factories have overtaken jute products as the country's biggest export.

This has been a boon for poor urban women. From the start, young unmarried girls were preferred because they were less trouble as industrial labour. Housemaids began deserting their "begun sahibs" (mistresses) for better pay and freedom from the drudgery of domestic chores. Wages for domestic work are poor, rarely exceeding U.S.\$6 to \$8 a month. Still, for some housemaids, the additional benefits of food, board and clothes compensate for the poor wages, even if little leisure-time is accorded.

For many, however, factory life seems paradise compared with sweeping and mopping floors, dressing poultry, cleaning fish and preparing vegetables, washing and generally being at

the beck and call of all the members of the family of their middle-class employers. But some have discovered that factory life also has its drawbacks.

Molina, a pretty 19-year-old maid who served Mrs. Abdullah for over eight years, abandoned the security of her mistress' home to join the wide world of garment workers. She got a job easily since she knew how to sew and iron. But it was not long before her regrets began.

Her monthly income is about \$20 but this does not cover food and board and Molina has to share a room with a fellow-worker's family. The job, she soon discovered, was tedious and the manager often keeps workers back long after dusk to catch a shipment schedule. Overtime work is compulsory and other girls who refuse to work late have lost their jobs.

Returning home after dark, women run the gamut of being pestered by local hoodlums who consider them fair game for being out so late. Rapes are not uncommon for workers homeward-bound after night shift and factory managements take no responsibility for workers' security.

Job security in an industry so dependent on foreign markets is also uncertain. In the mid-1980s, the U.S., Britain, France and Canada imposed lower quotas on Bangladesh clothes exports and 500 factories closed within months. The market opened up again in 1987 and hundreds of other factories have started since

then. During the closures, most women returned to housekeeping jobs but the beguins noticed a distinct change in attitude. "I'd rather slog myself than keep one of those insolent creatures!"

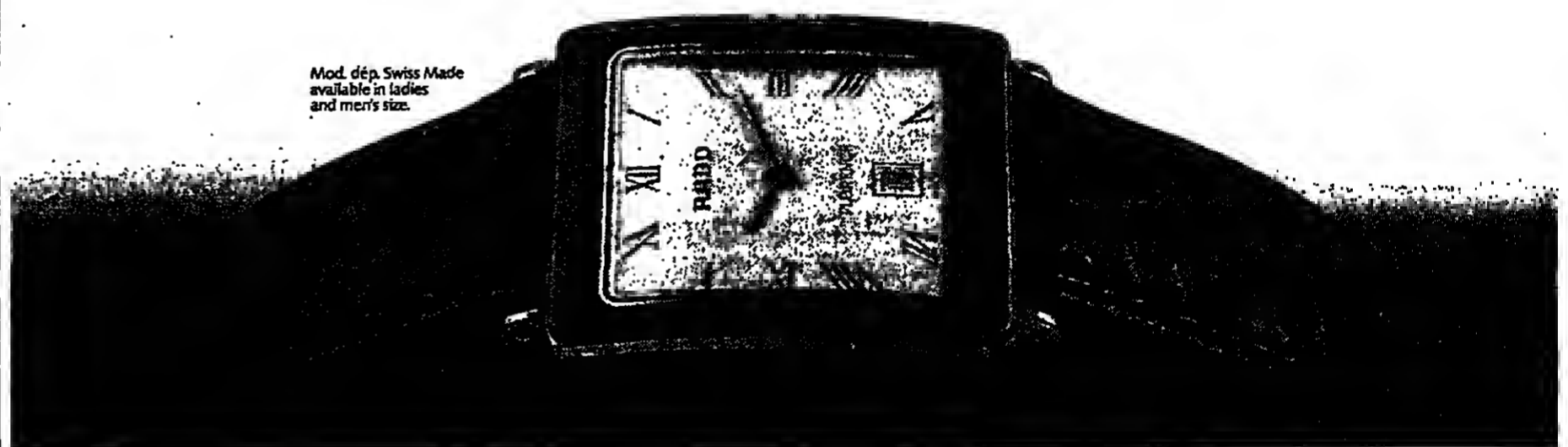
fumed Mrs. Kabir when confronted with a very articulate returnee.

Now, with the industry booming again, there are signs the government may lend an ear to employer complaints and rein in

the trade unions, preventing them doing even what little they can. Meanwhile, abuses in working conditions and non-compliance with minimum wage regulations, which call out for trade union attention, are as common as ever. — PANOS.

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Jordan nears full agreement with 'London Club' creditors

By Alistair Lyon
Reuter

AMMAN — Jordan has almost finalised a debt rescheduling deal with its commercial bank creditors after 10 weeks of haggling over terms, banking sources said Tuesday.

Jordanian officials confirmed they had reached an agreement in principle with a representative of a six-member steering committee negotiating for more than 90 Western and Arab banks grouped in the London Club of commercial creditors.

They were reluctant to disclose details until the full committee had approved the package, which

adds a new money element to terms agreed provisionally in September.

The banking sources said Jordan was set to secure \$45 to \$50 million in new bank loans to cover a financing gap and settle some arrears in interest payments. Otherwise terms were unchanged from those agreed in Amman on Sept. 10.

Jordan had sought to cut the interest margin from 13/16 point over LIBOR to 5/8 point and had asked banks to release undisbursed portions of current loans, worth \$48 million.

The September accord said banks would defer repayments of \$575 million of principal due between Jan. 1, 1989, and June 30, 1990, on debts of \$1.1 billion.

The payments would be rescheduled over 11 years with a five-year grace period when only interest would be paid. Jordan agreed to pay punctually interest due on debts to commercial bank creditors in 1989 totalling \$82 million.

Jordan's foreign debt totalled \$8.2 billion at the end of 1988,

including \$1.1 billion in undisbursed loans. Before rescheduling, it faced repayments of \$1.21 billion this year and \$1.28 billion in 1990.

It reached a rescheduling agreement with the Paris Club of government creditors in July and has since signed five bilateral accords with club members, including West Germany and the United States.

Gulf International Bank BSC and Standard Chartered Bank are co-chairmen of the London Club steering committee for Jordan set up in July. Other members are Banque National De Paris, Commercial Bank of Kuwait, Manufacturers Hanover Trust Co. and Union Des Banques Arabes et Francaises (UBAF).

ECONOMIC NEWS BRIEFS

PTC records large cash surplus

AMMAN (Petra) — The Public Transport Corporation (PTC) announced Tuesday that it made a cash surplus of JD 126,000 in the past 10 months of this year despite an increase in operational costs. A statement said that the surplus was achieved despite increase in the prices of spare parts, the devaluation of the Jordanian dinar and the rise of the price of oil products. The recent increases in fuel prices and the higher cost of spare parts did not prompt the PTC to hike bus fares, the PTC statement added. At the same time, the statement said the PTC was going ahead with a plan to pay back loans and interest to several banks and financial institutions. It predicted that the PTC will be able to honour all its commitments for this year from its own resources and revenues.

Business failures get attention

CAIRO (Petra) — Jordan took part in a three-day international seminar on troubled companies in the Arab World which ended here Tuesday. Dr. Mithal Al Qudahi, who represented Jordan at the meeting, said that the participants reviewed research papers outlining causes behind the troubles encountered by companies and the difficulties in the transfer of modern technology to the developing nations to help them set up industrial businesses. Qudahi said the meeting also focused attention on the responsibility of banks and financial institutions and reviewed measures that could help "troubled" companies overcome their predicaments. Qudahi pointed out that well-conducted feasibility studies, cooperation between banks which give credit facilities on the one hand and the various businesses which benefit from such facilities on the other, can help avoid failures and defaulting.

Rafidain Bank reports \$1.4b profit

BAGHDAD (R) — Rafidain Bank made 448 million dinars (\$1.4 billion) profit last year compared to 389 million dinars (\$1.14 billion) in 1987, according to its balance sheet published Tuesday. The Rafidain was Iraq's only state commercial bank until the state-owned Al Rasheed Bank was established last year.

EC grants \$1.6m for Egyptian centres

BRUSSELS (AP) — The EC granted \$1.65 million Tuesday for the construction and running of 20 family planning centres in Egypt. The EC Commission said the centres will be built in the southern province of Qena, where the population grows by 4.6 per cent annually. It said it was hoped this rate could be halved with the help of family planning centres. The European Community funds — worth 1.5 million European Currency Units — will pay for the building of the centres and for running them during the first five years of operation, the commission said.

Raki price rise dismays Turks

ISTANBUL (R) — Dismayed Turks saw the price of their favourite alcoholic drink leap by 25 per cent Monday but predicted that more people would reach for the bottle. "I've been drinking raki every night for 50 years. I've seen so many price hikes that I cannot count, but the latest one hurt the most," said Muzaffer Dener, a retired civil servant. The price of a bottle of raki, Turkey's traditional aniseed-flavoured drink, went up to 10,000 lira (\$4.3) as part of a series of price hikes to increase government revenues. Raki lovers, already suffering the strains of an annual inflation rate of more than 70 per cent, said depressed drinkers would now even drink more. "I don't think Turks are drinking for pleasure. They are drinking because of worries, economic hardship. Now more depression will send raki consumption up," Muzaffer Aksahin, a tradesman, told the mass circulation daily Hurriyet.

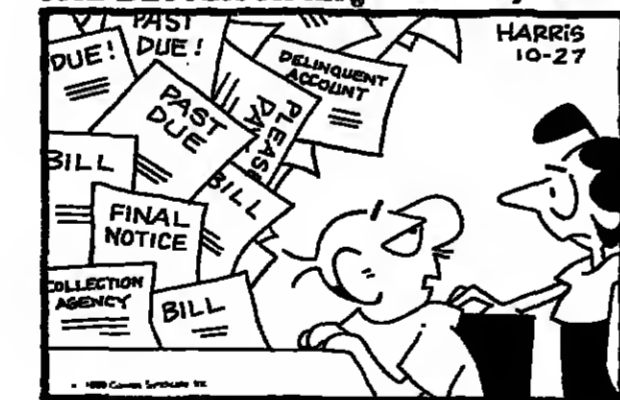
GCC to discuss possible gas grid

ABU DHABI (R) — Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) officials will meet in Doha next month to discuss a possible gas grid to link the six-member group and ways to develop Qatar's vast North Field natural reserves. "The meeting will decide if there will be a unified network or not in the light of quantities and prices," Abdullah Al Qawaiz, GCC assistant secretary-general for economic affairs, told reporters. Qatar began drilling in August in the North Field, the world's largest single natural gas field with reserves estimated at 350 trillion cubic feet.

Boeing workers end 7-week strike

SEATTLE (R) — Workers at Boeing, the world's biggest aircraft maker, have voted to end a seven-week strike which delayed deliveries of planes and hit airlines' expansion plans. Mechanics at the huge U.S. manufacturer approved a new three-year contract Monday night when 81.4 per cent voted in favour of a pay deal, union officials said. The 57,800 mechanics will receive a wage increase of four per cent the first year and three per cent in the second and third year. They will also receive lump sum bonuses of 10 per cent of their salary the first year and five and four per cent in the following two years. Mandatory overtime for the workers has also been cut to 144 hours per quarter, down from 200 hours before the strike. In recent years, the mechanics worked long overtime hours to increase production to meet increasing demand for Boeing jets. The company, which has a total work force of 145,265, has a huge backlog of orders for more than 1,600 aircraft worth about \$ 80 billion.

THE BETTER HALF. By Harris



"I want to go get a pack of gum, but I'll need your father to co-sign the loan."

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Gold breaches \$400 level

LONDON (R) — Helped by a weaker dollar and buying in Asia and the Middle East, gold broke through \$400 an ounce in Europe Tuesday for the first time in 10 months, precious metal analysts said.

They predicted it could go higher, but the consensus was that the next plateau would be \$420 and that any rise through that level could take some time.

Bullion, a traditional haven in times of financial uncertainty, was quoted in Europe in early afternoon at around \$400 an ounce, little changed from its morning fixing in London of 400.30. It had closed Monday at \$396.25 and last finished above \$400 on Jan 26.

London-based gold specialist Timothy Green said recent events in Eastern Europe were not particularly bullish for gold as Communist bloc sales this year would probably rise.

But he added that the mini-stock market crash in mid-October altered a situation in which Western inflation was generally being contained despite high interest rates.

As a result some investment funds were switched into gold

from equities and bonds. "This was a crucial event," Green said. Analyst Michael Coulson of London brokers Kitcat and Aitken cited several influences for the rise but could pinpoint no dominant factor.

"There is general concern about currencies, particularly the dollar, equity markets, interest rates and so on but there nothing specific you can put your finger on," Coulson said.

"I personally find that encouraging. Unease is a much better fuel for the gold market than some specific concern that once it is sorted out leaves gold punters with nowhere to go but backwards," he added.

Analyst Michael Spriggs of Warburg Securities in London said investors had become jittery about world equity markets and rising inflation.

"We were all getting a bit blinkered by the impact of a high interest rate (in Britain), low inflationary environment and the strengthening U.S. dollar but the same has changed recently," Spriggs said.

"The reappearance of Middle Eastern buying has helped fuel the latest upturn," he added.

Active Swiss and Far Eastern buying were also mentioned by some traders as features of the rise.

Spriggs forecast an average price for 1990 of \$425 an ounce, with a test of \$450 possible around mid-year.

Kitcat and Aitken's Coulson was more bullish with a forecast average price of \$440 for 1990.

"We should see steady progress with another run to \$500 towards the end of next year," Coulson said.

Spriggs also saw no reason why gold should not eventually forge ahead to \$500. The last time it broke above \$400 in September 1986 it took 15 months and the crash of '87 to briefly breach \$500 in December 1987.

The prospect that U.S. interest rates could be brought down slowly to prevent a recession could also be supportive for gold, analysts said.

Gold's recent strength has reversed a two-year downturn which culminated on Sept. 15 with the metal falling to a three year low of \$334.75 an ounce.

Physical demand, particularly in Asia, initially helped to stem the decline and a drop below \$350 never looked likely, analysts said.

World Bank calls for new deal to rescue Africa from poverty

NAIROBI (R) — The World Bank wants to pull Africa out of its poverty with a new deal that would dwarf the sums spent on rebuilding Western Europe after the destruction of World War II.

"The outlook for Africa is potentially devastating," it warned in a report being published Wednesday entitled "Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth."

"Just as Europe was seen to be especially needy immediately after World War II, and India in the 1960s, so today Africa requires concentrated and coordinated support to overcome its grave difficulties," it said.

It proposed that donors should raise official development assistance for countries south of the Sahara by four per cent a year in real terms during the 1990s, from \$15 billion next year to \$22 billion (in 1990 prices) by 2000.

This compares with \$11 billion received in 1986, the same in nominal terms as the cost of the U.S. Marshall plan which reconstructed post-war Europe.

The bank's study focused on 45 sub-Saharan countries, excluding South Africa and Namibia which is on course for independence next year from Pretoria's rule.

World Bank President Barber Conable, in a foreword to the 300-page report, said it evolved from a prolonged inquiry that extensively involved African researchers, private businessmen and public officials, as well as a broad spectrum of donors.

"The difficulties facing Africa are formidable. The margin for manoeuvre is slim indeed," Conable warned. "The risks of failure are devastating in human terms."

The report urged a long-term "people-centred" strategy based on more spending on education, health, science, technology, and on the region's decaying infrastructure and environment.

Foreign aid would continue to play a crucial role into the next century, falling gradually in importance only after the year 2010 and then only if the bank's proposed policy reforms and targets were met.

The strategy would combine deeper and prolonged economic reforms, but include special measures to alleviate poverty and protect the vulnerable.

It proposed a doubling by the year 2000 of public spending on development of human resources, to about eight to 10 per cent of gross domestic product, to enable the region to compete in a new technological age.

"Africa's lack of skills and strong public and private institutions accounts, more than anything else for its current predicament," it said.

The current crisis was characterised by climbing foreign debt, weak growth in farm output — the backbone of most economies — a decline in industrial production, a halving in the region's share of world trade since 1960, and "explosive" population growth.

It noted the region had suffered almost a decade of falling per capita incomes and 100 million people were undernourished.

"Overall Africans are almost as poor today as they were 30 years ago," it said.

In order to combat hunger, provide jobs for a labour force that could triple to more than 600 million people over the next 30 years, and achieve a modest improvement in living standards, the region's economies must grow by at least four to five per cent annually, it said.

These targets, which it called highly ambitious, far exceed the two per cent annual economic expansion recorded during the



Barber Conable

1980s and the average 3.4 per cent since 1961, which in turn only just outstripped the 3.3 per cent growth in population.

"No region in the world has ever managed to develop with so high a rate of population growth," it said, predicting the population could double from nearly 500 million people next year to one billion in 20 years.

Over the next decade at least, agriculture should provide the main engine of economic expansion, it said, adding the region must aim at four per cent a year growth in farm output in the long term, double the average achieved since 1960.

The report set a target for growth in industrial output of five per cent, rising eventually to seven or eight per cent a year, and targets of four to five per cent for other sectors.

It called for further relief on the region's \$138 billion foreign debt and for more regional economic integration.

It also called for more efficient government, warning: "None of the measures will go far, nor will much external aid be forthcoming, unless governance in Africa improves."

Peanuts

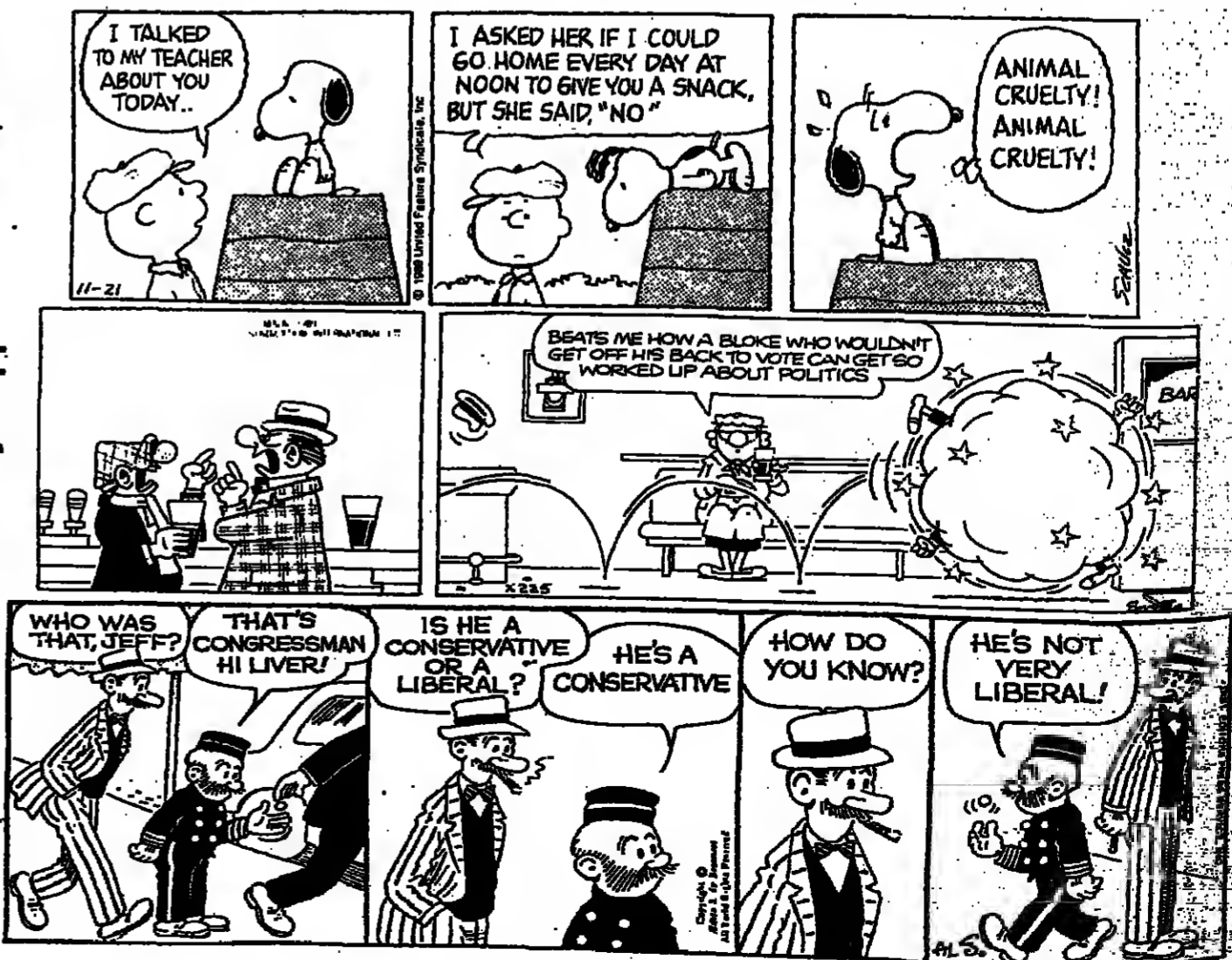
11-21

Andy Capp

11-21

Mutt'n Jeff

11-21



Tanks move to crush last rebel positions

Powerful explosions heard in San Salvador

SAN SALVADOR, El Salvador (AP) — For the first time since a huge rebel offensive waned late last week, residents of San Salvador capital were awakened Tuesday by powerful explosions.

The first of several blasts interspersed with exchanges of rifle fire echoed from the western sector of the capital at 4.30 a.m. (1030 GMT).

The blasts appeared to come from the direction of Merlot, a suburb where combat flared Monday, or from the slopes of the San Salvador volcano that looms over the capital's north western sector.

Lights went out following the first explosions, indicating they may have been guerrilla bombings of power lines on the volcano's lower slopes.

A little less than an hour later, other explosions echoed from the direction of the volcano and an airplane equipped with rockets and machine-guns passed over the city's outskirts.

On Monday, there was scattered fighting between guerrillas and government troops in several neighbourhoods as the military slowly regained control of a capital struggling to return to normal after nine days of fighting.

Government workers began receiving overdue paychecks and businessmen were repairing sabotaged power installations. Officials said the rebels had blown up seven of the country's 16 main power lines along with about 40 towers and other equipment.

Also, troops seized 16 lay workers from the Episcopal Church, where they had been working with war refugees. At least three of the workers later released.

At least 1,000 people have been killed and hundreds rendered homeless in the offensive, which began Nov. 11.

Col. Rene Emilio Ponce, head of the joint chiefs of staff, late Monday toured a neighbourhood in the eastern district of Soyapango where he said the rebels were making a "last stand."

Soyapango was the scene of some of the heaviest fighting in the offensive.

Light tanks had moved into the area, prompting speculation the army was planning to blast guerrillas out of positions in houses evacuated by most of their inhabitants.

Government soldiers Sunday and Monday raided at least seven churches or church schools that had been housing refugees from the fighting, the worst in the capital in 10 years of civil war.

Church workers and war refugees sheltered there were questioned and the buildings searched for arms, ammunition and medicine, said church officials, workers and witnesses.

Salvadorean rightists consider

the country's churches, especially those that work with the poor, hotbeds of subversion. Authorities sometimes suspect them of aiding or harbouring guerrillas.

Foreign workers, including a dozen Lutheran missionaries, were arrested and expelled from the country in recent days.

U.S. Ambassador William Walker told reporters the arrests of the lay workers were "very unfortunate" and described the raids as the work of "overly aggressive" security forces.

He was asked if the raids, the massacre of six Jesuit priests Thursday and other incidents indicated President Alfredo Cristiani was having trouble maintaining control over the more extreme elements in his rightist government.

"Management control problems exist in situations like this," said Walker. In Washington, the Congress rejected attempts to restrict U.S. military aid to Cristiani, heading an admonition from President George Bush not to further weaken a "freely, democratically elected government."

But, underscoring congressional outrage over the murders of the priests, their housekeeper and her teen-age daughter, the House approved 409-3 a non-binding resolution asserting that bringing the killers to justice would be "instrumental in determining continued U.S. support" for El Salvador.



A member of the Salvadorean Red Cross consults with a guerrilla fighter about the evacuation of civilians from the suburb of Soyapango.

Sri Lanka accuses India of setting up illegal army

COLOMBO (R) — Sri Lanka charged Tuesday that an illegal Tamil militia which attacked police stations and an army camp at the weekend had been set up with the help of Indian forces.

"We are aware that an illegal para-military force has been set up under the North-East Provincial Council with the patronage of the Indian forces," Foreign Minister Ranjan Wijeratne said.

"They constitute youth conscripted or forcibly recruited, fully armed with sophisticated equipment and trained in the art of warfare," said Wijeratne, who is also deputy defence minister.

"The sophisticated weapons in the hands of this illegal para-military force could not have reached them without the knowledge or connivance of the IPKF (Indian Peace Keeping Force)," he said in a statement.

An Indian High Commission (embassy) spokesman declined to comment.

About 300 people, including members of the security forces, the attackers and civilians were reported killed when the illegal militia known as the Tamil National Army (TNA) attacked five police stations and an army camp in eastern Amara district.

The targets were pounded with mortars, rocket propelled grenades and machine guns, military sources said. Three air force helicopters were hit and damaged.

Government spokesman said Ampara, which has a mixed population of Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims, was quiet but tense Tuesday.

They said hundreds of police

stations had fled fearing fresh attacks.

The chief minister of the North-East Council, Vairatharajah Perumal, had said the clashes could have been avoided if the government had heeded his advice and not sent the Sri Lankan army to Ampara.

However, Wijeratne said the Sri Lankan forces were sent to Ampara at the request of the chief minister following the withdrawal of the Indian force.

Ampara was the first district to be vacated last month by Indian troops making a phased withdrawal from the island. India has said it will try to pull back the remaining 30,000 troops from the island by the end of December.

Wijeratne said the timing of the attacks was significant when the government had made a "substantial breakthrough" in its battles against leftwing Sinhalese rebels in other parts of the island.

Assembly begins work on Namibian independence

WINDHOEK, Namibia (AP) — The recently elected assembly held its first session Tuesday to work on the constitution that will pave the way for Namibia's independence after 74 years of South African rule.

The 72 assembly members gathered at the Tintenpalast, the seat of government in the territory since it was built by the German colonial rulers in 1910. "Reconcile us, so that the decisions taken in this house will lay the groundwork for a sound and happy future," the Rev. Zephania Kameeta said in prayer that opened the assembly.

The South-West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO), which waged a 23-year war against South African rule, won 41 of the 72 seats in elections earlier this month. However, the constitution must be approved by at least 48, or two-thirds, of the members.

The Democratic Turnhalle Alliance, a multiracial coalition that favours a capitalist economy, has 21 seats. The remaining 10 seats are divided among five other parties.

SWAPO President Sam Nujoma opened the assembly as acting chairman. But as expected, his party nominated Hage Geingob, who headed SWAPO's election campaign, to become the permanent chairman.

The initial sessions are expected to focus on setting ground rules for writing the constitution.

The parties have said they hope the document will be completed by early next year and independence from South Africa can be declared shortly thereafter.

Marri Alhtisari, head of the United Nations contingent monitoring the independence process, was present at the opening of the assembly. He has said he expects Namibia, also known as South-West Africa, to become independent before the U.N. is scheduled to depart at the end of March.

South Africa captured Namibia from Germany in 1915 and received a League of Nations mandate to administer the territory. The League's successor, the United Nations, revoked the mandate in 1966 and SWAPO then launched the bush war when South Africa refused to grant independence.

South Africa agreed last year to relinquish control of Namibia under a regional peace treaty that also calls for a phased withdrawal of Cuba's 50,000 troops from Marxist-ruled Angola, Namibia's northern neighbour.

South African Louis Pienaar continues to serve as Namibia's administrator during the transition to independence and the territorial police force remains in charge of law and order.

South Africa's final 1,500 troops in Namibia began leaving the territory last week, and the withdrawal is scheduled to be completed before Friday.

Gunmen kill Basque MP, wound another in Madrid

MADRID (R) — Gunmen burst into a Madrid restaurant and shot dead a Basque separatist member of parliament and critically wounded another Monday night, police said.

Witnesses said two men, one of them hooded, forced their way into the restaurant shortly after 11 p.m. (2200 GMT) and fired at a table occupied by Ignacio Etxeola and Jose Muguruza. The two men were newly-elected members for Herri Batasuna (HB), a radical Basque party widely seen as the political wing of the separatist group ETA.

It said earlier Monday its members of parliament would end a boycott and attend the first session of congress (lower house) Tuesday.

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U.N. adopts convention on rights of child

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — Children have the inalienable right to grow up in a healthy environment free from abuse or exploitation, the General Assembly has declared in adopting a global convention on the rights of the child.

"For children, this is the Magna Carta," said James Grant, executive director of the U.N. Children's Fund, likening it to the 13th century British constitution guaranteeing political and civil liberties.

With over 100 children watching from the galleries, Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar declared it "the most important step toward realizing our common purpose of promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and fundamental freedom

provision supported by U.S. President George Bush's administration.

More than 95,000 child soldiers lost their lives in the Iran-Iraq war, and over 200,000 15-to-17-year-olds serve in various armed forces worldwide today.

Norway, Sweden, France, West Germany, Italy, Spain, Australia, Canada, Mexico and other nations wanted the draft age raised to at least 17, and the Soviet Union was willing to agree with that standard.

The United States, however, held out on the grounds that the 1949 Geneva Conventions on warfare and their 1977 additional protocols specify the age of 15 and the new convention should conform to that international agreement.

The convention is "as visionary as it is timely," Perez de Cuellar said, noting it "addresses the needs of humanity's most vulnerable - and most cherished resource."

The U.N. Children's Fund and many governments and private agencies say the agreement sets new standards they can use to fight neglect, sexual exploitation and other abuse.

"It sets universally accepted standards to protect almost half of the world's population," said Jan Martenson, U.N. under-secretary-general for human rights.

The convention has engendered controversy, however. It allows anyone 15 or older to be drafted into military service, a

Rush to West adds chaos in E. Germany

GOESCHWITZ, East Germany (AP) — The rush of East Germans to enjoy their new freedom to visit the West has added a touch of chaos to an already struggling economy.

At the railroad station in this southern East German town, the small drab-looking restaurant was closed "for technical reasons" as a sign said, leaving scores of travellers standing out in the cold until their delayed train arrived.

"I guess he has gone 'duben,'" said Heinz, a 49-year-old teacher, using the German word for "cross" that usually refers to flight to West Germany.

"Or he may have gone off with his family across the border with a visa for a day's shopping."

Can the restaurant operator just up and do that? "At worst, he gets an admonishment but he cannot be fired, and the kids just play booby from school," was the teacher's reply.

Chaos is an understatement for the transport situation in East Germany. Weekend trains were hours late and filled to overflowing despite the extra trains added to cope with the huge number of passengers.

Filling stations in some areas were said to be without gasoline because people had stocked up for trips to the West.

"Why do you all have to leave at the same time and immediately? Why can't you wait a few weeks when travel will be easier?" a Western traveller asked a frail man in his 80s, who had to stand on an East German express train because all the seats were taken.

"You don't understand," the

elderly man's wife intervened. "Although we are old we have never been there because we had no relatives to invite us."

Pensioners above the age of 65 were allowed in the past to travel to the West to visit relatives.

"What would you do if you had been locked up for almost 30 years?" asked a third passenger. "It's like dogs in a kennel. If you open the door they will not sit still but jump out full of joy."

Working morale is low in the state-run economy. An East German newspaper, Leipziger Volkszeitung, estimates that people spend on average only five hours of an eight-hour working day actually working.

"Wages and salaries are paid for absence, mere presence (without work) or poor quality products," observed the East Berlin newspaper Neue Zeit.

Wolfgang, a bearded driver of the "people's owned" taxi enterprise in Karl-Marx-Stadt, said that the remuneration system makes no sense.

In a slow month when fares don't fulfil the monthly revenue quota, Wolfgang earns less than his regular salary of 1,000 marks before taxes, he said.

This month, open borders have meant a record revenue for him because most people returning to Karl-Marx-Stadt Station from their shopping trips over the West German border need a taxi to carry home their purchases.

But Wolfgang, who expects to take in double his quota this month, will not receive more than his regular salary.

"It does not make sense to penalise you on a slow month for what you cannot be blamed and

then refuse to pay you more on a busy month like this," he complained.

There is no music in the taxi, which is linked to the central switchboard by a two-way radio.

"The car radios were removed because some colleagues tuned in the 'Deutschlandfunk,' he said, referring to the national anthem broadcast at midnight by many West German radio stations, which can be received almost everywhere in East Germany.

Wolfgang, who was refused a visa by Communist authorities when his father died in West Germany four years ago, said he would like to visit the West, but not yet.

"I would have to wait three hours in line to change my 15 marks and perhaps another hour to get my visa and then at least another four hours in a traffic jam before I could cross the border," he explained.

The 15 East German marks is the maximum an East German citizen can change per year into hard currency at a rate of one-to-one to the West German mark. On the black market, one East German mark is worth 20 West German marks.

In the town of Rudolstadt, a queue of about 200 metres started at a savings bank and seemed to end in a grocery store.

"There are two lines and they meet in the middle," said an elderly woman. "In one they line up for 15 marks and in the other they wait for bananas at the grocery store."

"That's East Germany," said the woman, a 75-year-old physician. "We spend a lot of time in

Rightwing Indian leader predicts instability after opposition victory

NEW DELHI (R) — The leader of an increasingly powerful right-wing Hindu party said Tuesday that India faces instability if the opposition alliance he backs wins this week's elections.

Lal Krishna Advani of the Revivalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was harsh in his comments about deep differences between opposition groups that could affect their chances of forming a government.

"It is a mess," Advani said of the arithmetic likely to result from the elections to the 545-member parliament.

India's 498 million voters decide Wednesday, Friday and Sunday whether they want a change of government. Opinion polls suggest Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's Congress Party faces defeat for only the second time in 42 years.

Speaking in a voice hoarse from campaigning, Advani used strong language about the Janata

Dal, core of a coalition of five opposition groups called the National Front.

The BJP refused to join the alliance, but worked out a seat-sharing deal with it so it would not split the opposition vote. It has promised to support a National Front government.

"My objective is to topple Gandhi, to see that dynastic rule in Delhi comes to an end. That in itself would be a boon. I do not see Rajiv returning again if he's defeated this time. He's not Indira Gandhi," Advani said in an interview.

If Gandhi loses, the Janata Dal's Vishwanath Pratap Singh is the frontrunner to succeed him. He is unlikely to get the job without a fight from other ambitious opposition leaders.

"I visualise a period of political instability. I do not see the Janata Dal as a stable entity. It is here today, it may not be there six months hence. It may fragment

again. There may be fresh realignments," Advani said.

While Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi jets around the nation in a campaigning frenzy, his Italian-born wife has been diligently keeping the home fires burning.

The victim of constant opposition taunts because she is a foreigner, 41-year-old Sonia Gandhi has been an indefatigable campaigner on her husband's behalf in his own parliamentary constituency of Amethi.

Leaders of the National Front opposition alliance rarely pass up an opportunity to poke fun at the prime minister's wife of 21 years.

The jibes contrast sharply with the respect — almost veneration — Mrs. Gandhi has been shown as she tours the sprawling Amethi constituency in the electorally vital north Indian state of Uttar Pradesh.

WORLD NEWS IN BRIEF

Rockets slow Cambodian rebel drive

ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand (R) — An offensive by U.S.-backed guerrillas and the Khmer Rouge in north western Cambodia appeared to have stalled Tuesday under withering rocket fire, Thai and Cambodian sources said. They said the Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) and the radical Khmer Rouge had failed to capture two of their main targets, Svay Chek and Nimit, although they overran several defence outposts and villages around them. Diplomats said the weaker KPNLF, which is advised by U.S. intelligence officials, was risking its Western aid lifeline by taking part in simultaneous attacks with the Khmer Rouge, which is condemned by the West for its bloody 1975-78 rule. There was no independent estimate of casualties, but a KPNLF official said 35 government soldiers and six KPNLF fighters had been killed in the offensive, which began before dawn Monday.

U.S. pressuring contras for accord

MANAGUA, Nicaragua (AP) — The U.S. State Department is exerting "strong pressure" on the Nicaraguan rebels to sign an agreement with the Sandinista government, an observer to the talks has said. "I am hopeful they won't get up from the (negotiating) table without signing something" today or tomorrow, Cardinal Miguel Obando Y Bravo said in an interview with an independent radio station. Asked if the United States was putting pressure... Very strong pressures. Negotiators, who recessed Friday, planned to meet again Monday afternoon at a bargaining table in Washington. Obando Y Bravo, president of the National Reconciliation Council established under a 1987 regional peace agreement, returned from the United States Saturday to attend the ordination of five priests. He said he did not plan to return to Washington unless he was needed. Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega also expressed hope for a settlement. "It seems that now there is a willingness on the part of the United States to reach an agreement," he said Sunday.

Panamanians protest U.S. exercise

PANAMA CITY, Panama (AP) — U.S. troops ringed an American military hospital with armoured carriers in a military exercise Panamanian officials called a violation of the Panama Canal treaties. More than 200 Panamanians shouted anti-American slogans outside Gorgas Hospital while Panamanian military officials argued with U.S. officials over the manoeuvre, which barred wire was also erected. The armed personnel carriers partially blocked the entrance to offices of the Panamanian Health Ministry, across the street from the hospital. Maj. Manuel Rodriguez, a member of a joint U.S.-Panamanian military board, protested that the manoeuvre violated the 1977 canal treaties because it obstructed traffic and had not been coordinated with Panamanian officials.

Walesa addresses labour congress

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Solidarity leader Lech Walesa, addressing a global labour congress, has called on Eastern Europe

and Latin America to work together in improving their dehydrated economies. "Our collaboration can be successful in seeking to alleviate our common burdens," Walesa said in an address Monday to the 22nd Congress of the World Confederation of Labour, Walesa, who arrived from visiting the United States, received cheers and several standing ovations from the 400 delegates, who had gathered from 92 countries, primarily in the Third World. Venezuelan President Carlos Andres Perez told the conference that the changes in Eastern Europe concern Third World leaders.

Indonesia wants nuclear plant

JAKARTA (R) — Indonesia, Asia's biggest exporter of oil and gas, plans to start operating its first nuclear power plant around the year 2003 to meet rising electricity demand, a senior official said Tuesday. Djali Abinisa, director-general of the National Atomic Energy Agency, told reporters the project would need about \$1 billion, with finance coming from abroad. He did not elaborate. He said the government was considering building the plant in Muria in central Java. Indonesia, the only Asian member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the world's fifth most populous country, estimates it will become a net importer of oil early next century as reserves dwindle while domestic consumption soars.

10 Tibetans held after marches

PEKING (R) — Eight people were sent without trial to labour camps and two others were arrested for staging pro-independence marches in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, according to a Chinese newspaper. The literary digest weekly said eight Tibetans were given terms of three to six years of reform through labour after they marched around Lhasa's central Barkhor Square on Oct. 14 and 15, shouting what it termed counter-revolutionary slogans in support of an independent Tibet. Two people were still being questioned under suspicion of inciting and plotting unrest, the newspaper quoted the Tibetan youth report as saying. The edition of the newspaper was received in Peking Tuesday. "The 10 people were arrested on the spot by our martial law forces for their crazed plot to slit the motherland," it said. Martial Law was imposed in Lhasa in March after three days of separatist rioting.

French set off nuclear explosion

WELLINGTON (R) — France set off a 30 kilometre underground nuclear blast on Mururoa Atoll in the South Pacific territory of French Polynesia Tuesday, New Zealand government scientists said. The explosion, the third since testing resumed on Oct. 24, took place at 6.29 a.m. (1729 GMT Monday), the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) said in a statement. The DSIR said it expected one more test this year, based on the pattern of the previous five years. The latest test brings to 110 the number of underground tests at sites near Tahiti. The blast was one-third the strength of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima in August 1945, and is relatively small compared with other French tests.

COLUMN

Editor sacked over royal photos

LONDON (R) — The editor of one of Britain's biggest mass-circulation Sunday newspapers was sacked for printing front-page colour photographs of the seven-year-old son of the Prince of Wales urinating in a park. Publishing tycoon Robert Maxwell said the People's editor, Wendy Henry was fired because the pictures of Prince William, printed last Sunday under the heading "Willie's sly pee in park", were deeply offensive to many people. The photographs, taken secretly in woodland at the prince's London school, drew an angry denunciation from him to the throne Prince Charles, the Prince of Wales, and his wife Princess Diana. Maxwell said he also objected to a photograph of U.S. singer Sammy Davis Jr. printed in last Sunday's People and purporting to show scans on his throat from cancer treatment. "There have been several occasions on which distressing photographs, which many people found deeply offensive, have appeared in the People," he said. I have therefore concluded reluctantly that a change of editorship is needed." The front-page pictures were part of a series showing Prince William, second in line to the throne, and his five-year-old brother Prince Harry playing in the grounds of the elite Weatherby School.

Wife of sial millionaire may be jailed for life

MIAMI (AP) — A woman convicted of hiring a gang to murder her millionaire husband three years ago should be sentenced to life in prison, a jury has recommended. Jurors, who could have recommended the death penalty for Joyce Cohen, reached their decision Monday after deliberating about 40 minutes. Dade County Circuit Judge Frederick Smith is not bound by the jury's recommendation. The same panel Thursday found Mrs. Cohen, 39, guilty of first-degree murder, conspiracy to commit murder and using a firearm in commission of the March 7, 1986, of Stanley Cohen. She was convicted of offering three hit men \$100,000 to kill her husband. Prosecutors said she supplied a map of their coconut grove home, disconnected alarms, unlocked the door and gave them her husband's gun. Prosecutors said the marriage had soured, and that the former secretary feared a divorce would end her jet-set lifestyle. Defence attorneys said the killings were due to Cohen's drug connections, but his relatives said that was a lie.

Nude dancing club gets loan

MONTREAL (AP) — A federal crown corporation has loaned more than \$1 million to finance the largest strip club in the national capital region, Radio-Canada has reported. The Federal Business Development Bank made two loans totalling 1,309,000 Canadian dollars (\$1.12 million) to proprietor Andre Fréchette so he could get the Lido Bar off the ground in downtown Hull, across the river from Ottawa, the French-language television network of the CBC said. Le Lido is billed as an exotic bar and employs about 20 young female strippers. A bank spokesman, Ken Cavanagh, said Monday morning that "The bank does not finance nude-dancing clubs." But later in the day a spokesman for the bank refused comment, saying information obtained by Radio-Canada concerns a confidential relationship between the bank and Fréchette.

Global weather

(major world cities)

	MIN.	MAX.	Weather
AMSTERDAM	05	13	Cloudy
ATHENS	10	20	Cloudy
BAHRAIN	23	27	Cloudy
BANGKOK	21	31	Cloudy
Buenos Aires	17	25	Cloudy
Cairo	12	24	Cloudy
CHICAGO	08	14	Cloudy
COLOMBO	22	31	Cloudy
Frankfurt	02	08	Cloudy
Geneva	02	08	Cloudy
HONG KONG	17	23	Cloudy
ISTANBUL	02	12	Cloudy
LONDON	08	11	Cloudy
LOS ANGELES	16	21	Cloudy
MADRID	08	12	Cloudy
MOSCOW	-02	05	Cloudy
NEW DELHI	24	31	Cloudy
NEW YORK	05	15	Cloudy
PARIS	08	15	Cloudy
ROME	05	20	Cloudy
SYDNEY	18	25	Cloudy
TOKYO	07	18	Cloudy
VIENNA	02	08	Cloudy

X-Indicates missing information.